

Sure Words of Prophecy

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Speaking the Truth in Love

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FOREWORD

One may question the need for another book dealing with the prophetic Scriptures. It is true that the study of prophecy has fallen into disrepute with many and one reason is that some have posed as prophets instead of sticking to the Word. However, we can rejoice that God has not left us in ignorance of things to come. We may say, as did the sacred writer: “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” (II Peter 1:19). Further, as we look at this more sure word of prophecy, we seek to show that it is important, if we would understand the plan of the ages, to rightly divide the word of truth. It is imperative that we see the difference between God’s prophesied program, having to do with Israel and the nations, and His unprophesied or secret program having to do with the Body of Christ. This latter program is found only in the writings of the Apostle Paul. It is in the Pauline epistles that we have the truth concerning the present outcalling of the Church, the Body of Christ, and its heavenly hope and destiny.

Another objection to the study of prophecy is that it has no practical value. This is totally wrong. There are many influences that help form our character and govern our conduct. One of these is knowledge. What we know helps form us and makes us the kind of persons we should be. We are not affected by that of which we are ignorant but we are molded by what we know. Also, our hopes and expectations, that which we can look forward to, does shape our lives. Many who are disadvantaged do not bestir themselves to seek a better life because they feel there is no hope for this to be realized. The Christian has a knowledge of the hope we have, and this hope, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, will indeed influence our lives for God and for good. The Apostle John had this in mind when he wrote: “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (I John 3:3).

As the student of the Word looks at the world scene today it should be evident that time is running out. We are rushing toward the last act in God's great drama of the ages. The stage is being set for the grand finale and the actors are already waiting in the wings. We are happy to report that none of these performers of the end-time are members of the Church, the Body of Christ. They have all been cut from this scene by way of the secret rapture. It is folly to try and put the unprophesied Church into a prophesied period of time; the great tribulation which is the time of Jacob's trouble.

As we consider this preview of things to come, may it be in dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God. May He enlighten the eyes of our understanding and may we be drawn closer to Christ in these evil days in which we are living, while anticipating that future day when we will be welcomed into His presence, then fully conformed to His image and to the praise of His glory. Amen! May it be so!

The Rightful Heir

"Who is worthy to open the book?"

The title of the last book of the Bible is not "The Revelation of St. John the Divine" as shown in the heading. The correct title is in the very first verse. It is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." He is the book's great theme and the dominant figure throughout, and all is leading up to the grand and glorious consummation when He returns to take unto Himself His great power and to reign.

Concerning that wonderful Person who is to be revealed the apostle wrote, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). Indeed, in Him is hidden all the fulness of the Godhead, so it might be apropos to refer to our Lord Jesus as the hidden Christ. In Old Testament times, as the pre-incarnate Christ, He was hidden. There were a few times He appeared in what we call a theophany but in the main He was hidden. When the fulness of time was come He was hidden for nine months in the womb of the virgin, and after His birth He was hidden in Egypt because of Herod's decree. On returning to the land He was hidden for many years in the carpenter's home in Nazareth and we have only one glimpse of Him, when at the age of twelve He went to Jerusalem with His parents. At about the age of thirty He began His public ministry and for a few brief years He went about doing the works of the Father who

sent Him. Rejected and crucified He was hidden for three days and three nights in Joseph's tomb. After His resurrection He was seen of them for forty days until His ascension, and now for many centuries He has been hidden beyond the blue and discernible only to the eye of faith. But praise His name, the day is coming when He will be hidden no longer; there will be the revelation (Gr. apokalupsis), the unveiling of Jesus Christ. Then every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him. Then all creation will bow down before the unveiled Christ in worship and wonder.

The fifth chapter of the Revelation is most important, and one should have a good understanding of it, for it is the key to all that follows. The word "and" at the beginning of this chapter ties it in with the preceding. In the fourth chapter the inspired writer, the Apostle John, has a glimpse of the throne in heaven and of the One seated on that throne, who is the Lord God Almighty Himself. Now in 5:1 John sees a book, or scroll, in the right hand of the Throne-Sitter. This book has writing both within and without and is sealed with seven seals. What is this book? It is, of course, a book of judgment, for as the seals are broken, judgments are visited upon the earth. The day of grace has ended and the day of judgment has begun. More importantly, however, the book is the Title-Deed to the earth and all therein.

Our Lord, the great Creator, gave the title to this earth to Adam, but because of his sin it was lost and now a usurper is in control. That usurper is Satan, who is called the god of this world and the prince of the power of the air, and we read the whole world lieth in the wicked one. The world is now waiting for redemption to be an accomplished fact, and to be brought back to its rightful owner. In Romans eight we read that all creation is groaning and travailing in pain and is waiting for redemption. And we read that even we, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our bodies. The redemption price has been paid, but

something more is needed. It reminds us of Israel of old waiting to be delivered from Egypt. The blood was on the doorposts which gave them safety in their homes from the death angel. But now they needed power to be delivered from their enemies and to get them out of the land of bondage. When they had come safely through the Red Sea, with all their foes destroyed behind them, theirs was a twofold redemption. They were redeemed by blood, the blood of the passover lamb, and they were redeemed by power, the mighty outstretched arm of Jehovah. The redemption price for earth has been paid by Christ. Now this seven-sealed book gives to the one worthy to open it the authority to manifest his power in dislodging the usurper and claiming the purchased possession. This brings us to the question as to who is worthy.

John had been gazing at the book and now his attention is diverted as he sees a strong angel and hears him crying out, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" There is no response, only a great silence, for no one in heaven, earth, or hell is found worthy, and John weeps. He doubtless knew something of the significance of that book. If it remained sealed, redemption unaccomplished, the inheritance unclaimed, then all the purposes of God in connection with earth and mankind would remain unfulfilled. Little wonder that John wept. Would that God would touch our hearts so that we also might weep over an unredeemed world. But John's tears are soon allayed. One of the elders tells him, "Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." Notice the titles given to this One who alone is worthy: "The Lion of the tribe of Judah" and "The Root of David." Certainly, these titles are here most significant. Israel has long been set aside, estranged from Jehovah, but now they are to be reconciled and God is to begin again to work on their behalf, so Christ is given these titles that speak of the renewal of His relationship to them. The reference to the lion is also of interest. He is now about to show His kingly, lion-like character and to manifest His power

in subduing His foes and claiming that which is rightfully His own.

At the word of the elder, John ceased weeping and turned to see this Lion who was worthy and who had prevailed to open the book. What was his surprise when he saw, not a Lion, but a Lamb; a Lamb that had been slain, with the marks of sacrifice upon Him. This was the Lamb of God, the Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world, the Lamb typified by every offering on every Jewish altar, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. As John looked, he began to understand that the power to redeem belonged to the Person who had paid the price to redeem. And what a price He paid; His life laid down and His precious blood shed on the Cross of Calvary. The Hebrew epistle opens with these words: "God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." Now, as John watches, he sees the Throne-Sitter place the book in the hands of the Lamb, for He has paid the price. He is the appointed Heir, and He now holds the title to all.

As the Lamb takes the book from the hand of the Throne-Sitter, the cherubim and elders fall before Him in worship and praise. They sing what is here called a new song, which is really the old song the redeemed saints of God have ever loved to sing. In the words of the King James Version these heavenly beings were singing about themselves, but insofar as we know, these were unfallen creatures who had no need of redemption. All other versions make their song impersonal such as the American Revised Version: "Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and did purchase unto God men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they shall reign upon the earth." Even though we are not in view here, we, as members of the Body of Christ, saved by the grace of God and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, will never tire of singing a like song, and we will certainly be able to make it

personal. He loved “us” and redeemed “us” by His blood out of every people and nation.

*Lamb of God! Thou now art seated
High upon Thy Father's throne;
All Thy gracious work completed,
All Thy mighty vict'ry won.
Ev'ry knee in heaven is bending
To the Lamb for sinners slain;
Ev'ry voice and harp is swelling,
Worthy is the Lamb to reign.*

The singers are soon joined by the heavenly angelic host, their number, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, an innumerable throng. Their theme is the same: “Worthy is the Lamb.” It would be good to note their sevenfold doxology and then to ask ourselves some heart-searching questions. (1) The Lamb is worthy to receive power. All power in heaven and in earth has been given to Him. He has authority. Have we yielded our all to His control, to His authority? (2) The Lamb is worthy to receive riches. He was rich but for our sake He became poor so that we might be made rich. Have we given ourselves to Him and done all we can to enrich Him? (3) The Lamb is worthy to receive wisdom. Christ has been made unto us the wisdom of God. Have we given Him our minds, our intellect, to be used on His behalf, and do we seek His divine wisdom to guide us in all our affairs? (4) The Lamb is worthy to receive strength. “Who is a strong Lord like unto thee?” Have we given of our strength and energy to bring others to Him? Are we able to say: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me?” (5) The Lamb is worthy to receive honor. In heaven the Lamb is honored, but on earth He is dishonored. Do we seek to live in such a way as to bring honor to Him? (6) The Lamb is worthy to receive glory. To Him be glory both now and forever. Do we endeavor in all things to give Him all the glory? (7) The Lamb is worthy to receive blessing. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.” Do we

just seek our own happiness or do we seek to bless the Lord, to make Him happy? He is worthy!

The Lamb is here seen standing. As Head of the Church, Christ has been seated at the Father's right hand. Now the Church age is ended, the Church is safe home in glory and Christ's mediatorial work is done, and He now stands to judge and to make war. The Lamb is not weak. He has seven horns which denote His great power. In Daniel's visions there are several references to horns and they speak of authority, governmental authority. After His resurrection the Lord told the disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," and now the Lamb is preparing to show that power. He stands, with the Title-Deed in hand and possessing all power. None can gainsay Him as He is about to claim His inheritance. He has incontestable right and unparalleled might.

The Lamb is also seen as Judge. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). He is seen as having seven eyes and this speaks of His perfection of vision. He sees all, nothing is hid from His eyes, and He knows all. In the seven horns and seven eyes are the attributes of deity. The horns speak of omnipotence, all power, and the eyes speak of omniscience, all knowledge. The psalmist said, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. ... Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psalm 139:1-6). Among men, right judgment is not always rendered because all the facts may not be known. With the Divine Judge there will be no miscarriage of justice, "For he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth" (Psalm 96:13). In thinking of the Judge, all should take heed. Dealings with the Lord Jesus Christ are inescapable; either we meet Him now and

claim Him as our Saviour or we will meet Him in that future day and then He will be our Judge.

This fifth chapter of Revelation is important and most outstanding for several reasons. First of all, it does mark the ending of man's day and the beginning of the Lord's Day. In fact, the book of the Revelation has to do with that Day. This is what John referred to when he wrote: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (1:10). He did not mean he was meditating on the first day of the week. He meant he was projected in spirit into that future Day of the Lord. That day begins here with the Lord Himself rising to begin the process which will culminate in His enthronement and with all things in subjection under His feet. He alone is to be seen, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb for sinners slain. He alone is worthy and is the Object of worship and praise by all. How little we know of all this today. In our worship services there is usually not a trace of genuine Spirit-directed worship. Man is always most prominent, the flesh all too evident, and little or no reference to the Lamb of God. He should be the subject of our songs, our speech, our prayers, our thoughts.

A grand and glorious oratorio is spread before us in this chapter. It is a veritable Hallelujah Chorus. First the cherubim and elders come on the scene, falling before the Lamb with their harps and golden vials, and singing "Thou art worthy." Soon they are joined by the angelic host, thousands upon thousands, with their sevenfold ascription of praise. And finally all creation joins in, saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Our hearts are thrilled as the universe echoes and re-echoes to this symphony of praise. The psalmist said, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." What shall we say to all this? We can only fall on our face in adoring worship and say, AMEN! HALLELUJAH!

The Nations

"Why do the heathen rage?"

What is in store for the nations of the earth? What is their future? Will they continue to exist, and for how long? Before facing these questions we need to examine the question in the chapter heading above. This question is found in Psalm 2:1, "Why do the heathen (i.e. nations) rage and the people imagine a vain thing?"

It should be noted first of all that there were no nations as such during the first 1800 years of man's history. There was just mankind, or humanity. Genesis 11:1 states: "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." It wasn't until about 2200 B.C. that mankind was divided up into raging, warring, striving nations. That took place at the tower of Babel when God came down in judgment and confounded their language and scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth. This was the beginning of nations (Genesis 11:5-9).

Here we have the disunited nations, while today we have the so-called United Nations, which is man's effort to undo the damage, and while one may appreciate their lofty aims, their efforts are sadly doomed to failure. The nations will not be truly united until they are united under the rule of that One who is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of

lords.”

What was the reason for the judgment that was visited upon the human race at Babel? We find the reason in the first chapter of Romans. There we learn that God had revealed Himself to man, not only in His creation but otherwise as well. But in spite of the abundance of revelation, rendering them without excuse, they turned away from the only true God and worshipped and served gods of their own devising. We read: “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God ... And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things” (Romans 1:21,23). They forgot God. At Babel it was “us, us, us,” and the wrath of God fell upon them. The nations of the world, including our own, should take heed, for it is written, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psalm 9:17). The ancient world gave God up and He perforce gave them up. “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Romans 1:28).

Why do the nations rage? According to Webster the word “rage” means to be in turmoil, uncontrollable. This is an apt description of the nations of the world. It is interesting to notice that in Daniel 7 God is describing four kingdoms, or nations, and He pictures them as wild beasts; a lion, a bear, a leopard, and the fourth as dreadful and terrible. And many nations today have ravenous beasts as a symbol. There is the British lion, the Russian bear, and our own American eagle with its cruel claws and deadly beak. This is a sobering thought. God sees the nations as wild beasts raging and preying on one another, and it is folly to think they are going to be tamed. In fact, their wildness will increase as we approach the time of the end. Jesus said we would see, not peace, as men like to dream, but what? He said, “And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars ... for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against king-

dom” (Matthew 24:6-7).

Why do the nations rage, and why is all this true? The question in Psalm 2:1 is answered in the very next verse: “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” The nations are raging and troubled because they have rebelled against God and think to get along without Him. And they rage because they are deceived by Satan and blinded to the light. In Revelation 12:9 Satan is described as “That old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.”

When God gave up the nations at Babel, He brought on the scene a new nation. That was Abraham’s seed, the nation Israel, and for the next 2000 years God confined His dealings with the human race to that nation. But that nation, though highly blessed of God, proved no better than the others and God was finally forced to turn away from them also. Here the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike, stands guilty before God and ripe for judgment. It was then that God sprang a grand surprise and through a new apostle revealed that instead of judgment it would be grace. This dispensation of grace that was ushered in, made known through Paul, has already lasted almost 2000 years. In this dispensation God is not dealing with nations but is saving individuals out from among the nations and offering eternal life as a free gift to as many as will put their trust in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

Is there a future for the nations when they will be owned and blessed of God? The answer is yes. God always had blessing for the nations in view. This is indicated in the call of Abraham when God said: “In thee and thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). Peter referred to this in Acts 3:25 when he told his Jewish audience, “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with

our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.” Peter then immediately adds, “Unto you first.” According to God’s prophetic program, Israel was to be blessed first and then the nations blessed through Israel. Both the nation and the nations will be blessed, but first they will have to go through the Great Tribulation, a time of purging.

The end-time is that future period of yet unfulfilled prophecy, in particular the seventieth week of Daniel’s great prophecy. This is a period of seven years, the latter half of which is called the Great Tribulation. The Lord spoke of this when He said, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). This is “the time of Jacob’s trouble” but all the nations will be troubled as well. Luke writes: “And upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear” (Luke 21:25-26). The Great Tribulation will truly be a time of unparalleled suffering for all nations of the earth. The saints of that age will suffer but their enemies will also suffer when God “ariseth to shake terribly the earth” (Isaiah 2:19).

The Great Tribulation will end with the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ as the rider on the white horse pulverizing His foes beneath His feet. There will then be the judgment of the nations. “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” (Matthew 25:31-32). Here it will be determined which nations will enter the millennial kingdom. The basis of this judgment will be the treatment accorded the witnesses who, during the tribulation, have been preaching the gospel of the kingdom. In Matthew 24:14 we read: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.” In some of the nations these witnesses will not be re-

ceived; they will be persecuted and even put to death. In other places they will be welcomed and cared for, and their message received. These are the sheep nations, and certainly we know that nations are made up of individuals, and these will be saved and enter the millennial reign of Christ. All who enter the Millennium at its beginning are saved, but those born during the Millennium will be born sinners and will need to be born again. Some of them will, while many will not and may be among those who take part in the final revolt at the close of the thousand years. But during the Millennium there will be nations, with a national identity, and they will be participating in all the blessings of that time and will be sending their representatives to Jerusalem each year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts (Zechariah 14:16).

Many years ago there was a popular song titled, "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise." People didn't know what they were singing about, but in reality the world is waiting for the Sun of Righteousness to rise with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2). Then Psalm 72:8-11 will be fulfilled and we will see the nations paying homage at His feet. "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." For a thousand years earth will have rest. Wars will be ended, the desert places will become fertile and fruitful, and even the wild animals will be domesticated. Society will be tranquil with justice for all and an equal distribution of earth's resources. This seventh millennial day in man's history will indeed be a Sabbath of rest.

In light of the above it is truly amazing that after a thousand years of the peaceful and beneficent reign of King Jesus, there will be those among the nations who will still rebel when given opportunity. Note Revelation 20:7-9, "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.” The Millennium is man’s last test and again he fails, proving that latent in the human heart is a spirit of insubordination against God and His anointed. All of the nations are not involved in this rebellion but only those defined as “the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog.” Bullinger says: “This suggests that the people of Gog had purposely got as far away from the centre of government as they could. As their hearts were far away, so they removed their persons.” This final rebellion is short lived. The rebels are summarily destroyed and Satan finds his final doom in the lake of fire. The fire from heaven visited on the rebels, the casting of Satan into the lake of fire, the dissolution of the heavens and earth, and the great white throne judgment, mark a stormy end to this present scene. But beyond the last storm lies the eternal calm. Time is now ended and eternity has begun. There is a new order altogether, referred to as a new heaven and a new earth, with the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down and the nations walking in its light. After the description of the New Jerusalem we read: “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it” (Revelation 21:24). Ford Ottman says: “At the close of the Millennium, as during it, there shall be nations. In this conception there is no difficulty, nor is there any in the fact of their having access to the holy city, unto which they shall bring their glory and honor.” Dean Alford says: “There shall still be dwelling on the renewed earth, nations, organized under kings, and saved by means of the influences of the heavenly city.” Dr. Bullinger writes: “Those nations, during the Millennium, that walk in the Divine light of the earthly Jerusalem, are transferred to the new earth, to walk in the Heavenly light of the New Jerusalem.” Here the hopes

and dreams of the nations will be fully realized. When God said to Abraham, “In thee shall all families (nations) of the earth be blessed,” He did not mean just for a brief period of time, but eternally.

Meanwhile, as the nations await the fulfillment of God’s prophesied program of blessing for them, God has brought in an unprophesied program by which He is visiting the nations and saving out of them a company of believers who constitute His blood-washed, ransomed and redeemed Church. Paul was the emissary to make this good news known. He was reminded of his commission in Acts 26:17-18, “Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles (nations), unto whom now I send thee, 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.”

In I Corinthians 10:32 is found God’s division of the human race. There we read, “Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.” Each one of these three has their own sphere of future blessing and it is important to recognize this as we study the Scriptures of truth.

The Nation

"Can these bones live?"

When God turned away from the nations He shortly raised up a new nation, a vessel through which the others might be brought back to Himself. That nation was the nation Israel and whoever reads the Bible must perceive the important place of that nation in the plan of God. In fact, the entire Bible concerns this nation with the exception of two rather brief sections. Those sections are: 1) The first eleven chapters of Genesis in which God disposes of the first 2000 years of human history, and 2) the thirteen inspired letters from the pen of the Apostle Paul covering the present 2000 years of the dispensation of the grace of God during which the Jewish nation has been set aside.

It bears repeating that if one would have a correct understanding of the Scriptures it is necessary to see the place of the Jew in the plan and program of God. Napoleon is reputed to have asked his chaplain to give him, in one sentence, the greatest proof as to the authenticity of the Bible. The chaplain replied he only needed one word, and that word was the Jew. God miraculously brought that nation into being; out of the loins of Abraham, and him as good as dead, and out of the deadness of Sarah's womb. He separated it from all the other nations, saying, "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine" (Exodus 19:5). He entered into a cove-

nant relationship with them and gave them exceeding great and precious promises. They could truly say, “He hath not dealt so with any nation” (Psalm 147:20).

What was God’s purpose in raising up this nation? The following are a few of the many:

1. To show the utter ruin and sin and guilt of the human race. Israel proved that man, even though highly blessed, is ever a failure, that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Whether down and out or up and out, there is no difference.
2. To place in the world a depository for His truth, His Word. “Unto them were committed the oracles of God.” Every one of the sixty-six books in our Bible was written by an Israelite, a Jew.
3. To provide a channel for the coming of the Redeemer. The genealogy of Christ connects Him to Abraham and when He came to earth He “was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.”
4. To place in the world a people who should be a witness to Himself. We read: “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen.”

Israel was the vine of God’s planting, tended and cared for by Him, and yet they failed. He could say, “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isaiah 5:4). They were indeed highly favored of God but in spite of it all, they failed every test. Note the following:

1. They were tested under the **covenant** and they failed. This was the covenant of law and God had to say: “Which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto

them” (Jeremiah 31:32).

2. They were tested under the **commission** and they failed. Like Jonah they were told to go to the nations but they refused and tried to run away from God.
3. They were tested under the **Christ** and they failed. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. They said, “We will not have this man to reign over us.”
4. They were tested under the **Convictor** and they failed. The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost and through the apostles gave them opportunity to repent, but instead they opposed themselves and blasphemed.

The Gentiles had long since given God up. Now, with Israel’s rejection of the Christ of God, the whole world stands guilty before God. It is then that God turned away from His prophesied program having to do with Israel and the nations. Israel is then set aside for a season as God brings in this unprophesied dispensation in which He is saving sinners by grace, apart from Israel and the law, and making those saved sinners members of that Church destined some day to be manifested with Christ in the glory. But is God through with Israel as a nation? No indeed. Is there yet a most blessed and glorious future for them? Yes indeed.

In Romans 11:1 the apostle asks this question: “Hath God cast away his people?” In other words, is God irrevocably through with the once-favored nation? Some would tell us yes, but in the Book the answer comes back clear and plain: “God forbid.” It is true that for a season they have been set aside, but in this same chapter we learn it is only until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. “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” (vs. 26).

Israel today is dead insofar as God is concerned. They are

devoid of spiritual life, but they will experience resurrection and the nation will be born anew. In Ezekiel 37 the prophet is given a vision of a valley of dry bones and the question is put to him, "Can these bones live?" His response was, "O Lord God, thou knowest." The bones did live: they came together, flesh and skin covered them, breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then the Lord said, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel ... Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel ... And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live" (vs. 11-14). This passage of Scripture certainly indicates that Israel is eventually to be, in the hands of Jehovah, an exceeding great army to accomplish His purposes in the earth. In the light of this and similar passages it is strange how anyone could believe that God has gone back on His promises to Israel and is through with them. Dr. Barnhouse was once asked why he retained his antiquated views on biblical prophecy. His reply was, "I could never abandon the teaching of the Word that God has a future place for the Jew as a nation."

It has been said that the prophets of Israel prophesied concerning three T's; the Tree, the Tribulation, and the Throne. They prophesied of Christ's first coming to die on the tree of shame, forsaken of God and of man. They prophesied of Christ's second coming to sit on the throne of His glory and to rule and reign in righteousness. They also prophesied of a time of tribulation, a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of clouds and thick darkness. Jeremiah referred to this when he wrote: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it" (30:7). Note, it is the time of Jacob's trouble, though all the earth-dwellers will be troubled as well, but it is not the time of the Church's trouble. The Church of the present dispensation, the Body of Christ, will be raptured before this Great Tribulation. We can legitimately use the illustration of Enoch and Noah as does Dr. Scofield in the following:

“Enoch, translated that he should not see death before the judgment of the flood, is a type of those saints who are to be translated before the apocalyptic judgments. Noah, left on the earth, but preserved through the judgment of the Flood, is a type of the Jewish people, who will be kept through the apocalyptic judgments and brought as an earthly people to the new heaven and new earth.”

In Matthew 24:15-26 the Lord is warning His Jewish hearers about that day of great tribulation and giving them instructions as to what they should do when that day comes. If the Church is to be here during that same period is it not strange that there are no similar warnings in any of the thirteen letters addressed to them? “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thessalonians 5:9). Israel will be saved out of it. The three Hebrew boys in the furnace of fire were typical of the Jewish remnant in the fires of the Great Tribulation. Just as those three came safely out of the fiery furnace the nation will come out of this last effort on the part of Satan to exterminate them. This is a time of kingdom preparation and Israel is being purged of their dross and being prepared for the place of headship they are to occupy in the kingdom. God says: “I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God” (Zechariah 13:9).

Approaching the end of His public ministry, and with the cross just ahead, our Lord is seen lamenting over Jerusalem, the city which stood for the nation. He says: “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” (Matthew 23:37-39). He had come to His own people Israel, the chosen nation, and they would not receive Him. Now He is leaving them, and using these prophetic words, He says: “I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early” (Hosea 5:15). They will indeed seek Him early. In their great affliction, in the time of Jacob’s trouble, they will cry out, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up” (Hosea 6:1). Then they will truly pray: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” Their prayer will then be answered by the personal return of Jesus, Messiah Ben-David, who will save them from their enemies and from the hand of all that hate them. “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zechariah 13:1). The prodigal nation will have come home, they will be forgiven, born again, purified and prepared for the place of leadership in the kingdom, when David’s throne will again be occupied and the word of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem.

The reason the nations are in turmoil and faced by problems that defy human solution is that there are a number of things out of place. And things will worsen, and not improve, until all are in their proper place. Thankfully, when Christ returns at the close of the Great Tribulation and destroys His foes at Armageddon, then all will be where they belong.

1. Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is not in His rightful place today. He is an alien and outcast from earth, despised and rejected of men, but one day He will have His proper place. He will be seated on His throne of glory, crowned with many diadems, and every knee bowing before Him and every tongue confessing His lordship.
2. The nation Israel is not where it belongs. The Jew has for long centuries been scattered among all the nations of earth,

suffering sore at the hands of those who have sought either to annihilate or to assimilate them. But the day is coming when they will all be back in the land of promise, no longer the tail among the nations but the head, with Jerusalem the world capital and the law going forth from Zion.

3. Satan is not where he belongs. He is at large deceiving the nations, stirring up war and strife, and blinding men's minds to the truth of the gospel. Some day, though, he will be put where he belongs; first, under lock and key for a thousand years in the bottomless pit, and finally the lake of fire.
4. And what about the Church which is Christ's Body? We are not really where we belong. True, we are in the world, but this world is not our home. Our citizenship is in heaven and we are here as ambassadors to represent our absent Lord. Soon we will hear the assembling shout and will be carried away to the celestial realm to be forever with our Head in glory.

One day all will be in their proper place and there will be a smooth and serene world order. The nation Israel, long a people scattered and peeled, will be back in their homeland and dwelling safely. Many Scriptures could be given that state this, but one or two should suffice. Ezekiel 36:24-28 says: "For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you ... And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." Also in Isaiah 43:5-6 God says, "Fear not; for I am with thee; I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather them from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." The same Lord who scattered them among the nations will re-

gather them, and as surely as the scattering was literal so will the regathering be. Some would try to spiritualize these promises to Israel but when they spiritualize, they are telling “spiritual lies.”

When Israel has been regathered and is back where they belong it will not just be to occupy the little sliver of land now held by the Israeli. In Genesis 15:18 is the land grant: “In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.” This was repeated in the commission to Joshua: “Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours; from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be” (Deuteronomy 11:24). This land was never fully occupied, even in the reigns of David and Solomon, but it will be in the future. Much of that land has long been barren, but in the Millennium the curse will be removed and there will be streams in the desert and the wilderness will blossom as the rose. In the Olivet discourse our Lord foretold earthquakes in the end-time and they are described in the book of Revelation. Great physical changes will have been wrought in the Mideast area, which Israel is to occupy, and Jerusalem will have become a seaport with an immense harbor connecting it to the Mediterranean Sea. All this, with its strategic location, will enable the nation to fulfill its mission and to be exercising rulership over all the world (See Romans 4:13).

With the Millennium ended, there is the Great White Throne judgment, where sentence is passed on all the unsaved dead. The Judge who sits upon that throne is so august and holy that the earth and the heavens flee away. Following this the Apostle John writes: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away” (Revelation 21:1). Here we enter the eternal state and the description is given of that city for which Abraham looked, whose builder and maker is God. Many make this city, the New

Jerusalem, to be heaven. John saw “that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:10). If it descends out of heaven it certainly cannot be heaven. Further, many think this city to be the eternal abode of members of the Church, the Body of Christ, of this dispensation. This is not so. This is the city for which Abraham looked and all his seed likewise, and it has Israel written all over it. It has twelve gates and on them the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. It has twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles and his name does not appear there, and our hope as members of the Body of Christ goes far beyond the new earth and even beyond the heavenly city.

It would be foolish to speculate concerning the new heaven and the new earth for we have the testimony of an eyewitness. In the opening verses of Revelation 21 the Apostle John says, “And I saw.” However, he is rather brief in his description of what he saw, save in the description of the New Jerusalem. One point that stands out is that God Himself will be tabernacling among men, holding sweet communion with His creatures as He did prior to the entrance of sin in the Garden of Eden. We love the “much mores” in the fifth chapter of Romans but here John gives us some wonderful “no mores.” There will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain, and blessed be His name, no more sin. Also, in reference to the new earth we have it stated “no more sea.” The sea was a remainder and reminder of the judgment that was visited on the pre-Adamite rebellion. That judgment was the saline sea, nothing but sea. “And the earth became without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2). The ruin was absolute. All forms of life were gone and nothing but a shoreless sea enshrouded in darkness. Even the restoration of the earth for the abode of man was only partial, for the sea still covers seven-eighths of the earth. But when the present earth has its fire bath, as noted by Peter, it will emerge renovated and purged with no

more sea, no reminder of sin and judgment past. “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isaiah 65:17). In Ezekiel 28:13 is a description of that Eden in the original creation and may also be descriptive of the restored Eden, for the new earth will be a veritable paradise. It will be as marvelous and majestic, as brilliant and beautiful, as it was originally in Genesis 1:1.

Here we have the eternal abode, not only of the nations, but of that nation which God referred to as “Israel my glory” (Isaiah 46:13). There is the promise that Israel’s seed would ever remain, for Isaiah 66:22 reads: “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.” Doubtless Israel will have a prominent place in the new earth, bringing untold blessing to others, but they will be most prominent in the heavenly city where the leaves of the tree of life are for the health of the nations, and where the nations will walk in the light of that city, where is the throne of God and of the Lamb. This is the bridal city where Abraham and all his faithful followers will have the promises fulfilled. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth ... But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:13,16).

Satan

"How art thou fallen from heaven"

In every age the people of God have suffered at the hands of evil men and it will be no different in the end-time. In fact, the saints will then be suffering even more. In Revelation 6:10 those who are martyred are crying out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" But though it is at the hands of ungodly men that God's people are opposed and oppressed, we need to remember that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). Behind the mere human is the real enemy, even Satan. He has always been active but will be most active during the time of Jacob's trouble, for then it will be a last ditch effort on his part to exalt himself, to destroy the favored race, and to thwart God's purposes for the earth. Then he will be going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Today he masquerades as an angel of light, and his ministers as ministers of righteousness.

There are those who do not believe in the personality of Satan. They deny that Satan is a person, and say that this supposed person is just an evil principle. All the references to Satan in the Bible certainly treat him as an individual, a person, and this is

true both in the temptation of Christ and also in Christ's statements concerning him. In Ephesians 6:11 we are told to put on the whole armour of God so that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, and in II Corinthians 2:11 we are instructed not to be ignorant of Satan's devices, lest he should get an advantage of us. He is indeed wily and tricky and has many devices to snare the unwary. It would suit his purpose well, and is perhaps part of his strategy, to have people either ignore him or to deny his existence. The Scriptures do portray him as a powerful foe, but greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

The question is often asked as to why God created the devil. The answer is that God did not create the devil. God created Lucifer, son of the morning, and he was without sin when created, but when he sinned and fell he became the devil. Ezekiel 28:15 reads: "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee." When created he was among the most beautiful and wise of all God's creatures. This contributed to his pride and to his resultant sin and downfall. "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by means of thy brightness; I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee" (vs. 17). It has been said he was God's prophet, priest, and king. As prophet he spoke for God to the universe, as priest he brought the worship of the universe to God, and as king he ruled for God. The statement "Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth" (vs. 14) could well be translated "Thou art the cherub, anointed to govern." It would appear that he was given sovereignty over the original earth. We read: "Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God" (vs. 13). This was not the Eden of Adam's time, but the heavens and earth of Genesis 1:1, a veritable paradise.

In Luke 10:18 Christ said: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." He was here speaking both historically and prophetically. In tracing the trail of the serpent from the "stones of

fire” (Ezekiel 28:14) to the “lake of fire” (Revelation 20:10) it is a downward path. The fall of Satan is fourfold. First, he was cast out of the third heaven into the spatial or atmospheric heavens. Next, he will be cast down to earth. Then he will be cast into the pit of the abyss for a thousand years, and finally cast into the lake of fire. The record of his original fall is found in 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.”

We note from this Scripture that the first sin was not committed on earth but in heaven. In spite of the lofty position occupied by Lucifer, the day-star, he was not satisfied. He was filled with pride and a desire to exalt self. The worship and praise directed to God he coveted for himself, and set about to make this so. He not only wanted to be equal with God, but to excel God. Five times in the passage above he said “I will.” But God said, “You will not.” Instead of being lifted up he was cast down, with hell his eventual end. In his rebellion many of the angels sided with him, perhaps a third of the heavenly host (Revelation 12:4), and as prince of the power of the air these are still under his control. Some think these fallen angels are the demons, while Pember and others believe the latter to be the disembodied spirits of a pre-Adamite race, to which we incline. With Satan’s rebellion and fall we have the beginning of what has been termed the Conflict of the Ages. This warfare has been going on ever since, with Satan opposing God and seeking to defeat His plans and purposes. Here we might ask another question: Why has God allowed Satan to carry on his devilish work for so long? It is true, of course, that what may seem a long time to us may be only an instant to God. However, this is one of those questions to which we will not have the answer until we get to

our heavenly home.

And now as to Satan's role and activity in the end-time. There have always been wars on earth, and Satan is most often responsible for them, but in Revelation 12 we read of war in heaven. Before looking at this in detail it will help to consider II Thessalonians 2:6-8. "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 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." According to these verses someone must be removed before Antichrist is revealed. Much has been written and debated as to who or what is the restrainer in this passage. Some say it is the Church, while most fundamentalists think it is the Holy Spirit, whom they say will go up with the Church at the Rapture. Perhaps the confusion is due to the usage of the coined word "restrainer," which is a misnomer. Wickedness is not being restrained. The world is ripening for judgment, the leaven is at work, but the cup of iniquity for the Gentiles has not yet come to the full. God has not yet brought an end to this day of grace because the world is not yet bad enough.

The Thessalonian believers were being persecuted and suffering to such an extent that some were teaching that the Day of the Lord had already set in. Paul writes to correct that idea. He says that day cannot come until first the Apostasy and then the Antichrist. The sin of man will culminate in the man of sin. Before that day of judgment and wrath begins, and before Antichrist is revealed, there is one who is holding on to something that is not rightfully his, and this one must first be removed. The words "withholdeth" and "letteth" are the same Greek word *katecho*, which more accurately means to retain rather than to restrain. It means to seize on, to hold fast, to possess. The same word is used in I Thessalonians 5:21 where we are told to "hold fast that which is good." Many other references could also be

given. Who is holding on to what? The answer is that Satan is holding fast to his entrenched position in the heavenlies “until he be taken out of the way.” This will take place following the Rapture. After the Church has gone up Satan will come down, and this brings us to the war in heaven described in Revelation 12.

At Christ’s first advent the message was “peace on earth” and now as His second advent nears it is “war in heaven.” We read: “And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 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” (Revelation 12:7-9). Many are surprised to learn that Satan has a place in the heavens. They think the devil is already in hell. The evangelist of a former day, Billy Sunday, used to kneel on the edge of the platform and carry on an imaginary conversation with the devil in hell, blaming him for all the trouble he had caused. No, the devil is not yet in hell; that will be his final end. He and his followers are at present in the spacial heavens, where he is prince of the power of the air, and he himself is forced to come periodically, as a creature, to give an account to God. In the Scripture quoted we see, in this bloodless conflict, the usurper and squatter expelled from the heavens and cast down to earth. This expulsion from heaven takes place in the middle of the seventieth week and Satan comes down filled with wrath as he knows his time is short. His time is the next three and a half years, and this is the period referred to by the Lord as the Great Tribulation. At his casting down, the song of victory is sung in heaven, but little wonder the cry goes out, “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea.”

The leader of the victorious army in this heavenly conflict is Michael the archangel. Michael is the commander of the heavenly host and this is the time referred to in Daniel 12:1.

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” Michael is Israel’s guardian angel. Here he stands up to fight in their interest, for the time of their restoration has come and this war is the initial action.

The dawn of Israel’s restitution is at hand, but before the sun of salvation rises for them, they must pass through the darkest night. Satan, cast down and confined to earth, is filled with rage and begins to persecute “the woman which brought forth the man child.” This woman is the nation Israel, and here we have the last great Anti-Semitic movement as Satan endeavors to blot that nation from the face of the earth. He knows what most preachers do not know, that all of God’s purposes for the earth are to be worked out through Israel. He knows his time is short, his doom is sure, but still will do all within his power to defeat the plan and program of God. This will indeed be the time of Israel’s trouble, but they will be saved out of it. God will provide a way of escape. “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent” (Revelation 12:14). When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He brought them into the wilderness where He sustained them for forty years. Here He again brings His people into a wilderness where He will providentially care for them for three and a half years. This will be the time when Israel, the unfaithful wife, will be restored and remarried to Jehovah, even as the prophet wrote: “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her ... And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi (i.e. my husband)” (Hosea 2:14,16). This flight into the wilderness is from Jerusalem and Judea and was foretold by the Lord in Matthew 24:15-21. These are the Jews in the land, most of whom have come to know Je-

sus as the Messiah through the testimony of the two witnesses. They are the remnant so often referred to, the embryo of the new Israel destined to govern the world. God will hide them till His indignation is past. He will say to them: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isaiah 26:20).

Satan will not let them escape without doing all in his power to stop them; hence we read: "And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood" (Revelation 12:15). What is this flood? Isaiah wrote: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (59:19). The flood is perhaps the armies that are yet to encompass Jerusalem, and the Lord will indeed raise up a standard against them, for we read: "And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth" (Revelation 12:16). Just as the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, so it may be these pursuing armies will be swallowed up. Dr. Seiss writes: "It is the region and time of miracle when this drinking up of the river which the dragon sends against the woman occurs. It is the region and time when there is to be a renewal of wonders, `like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.' It is the region and time of great earthquakes and disturbances in the economy of nature. And there is reason to think that it is by some great and sudden rending of the earth that these pursuing hosts are arrested in their course, if not en masse buried up in the convulsion."

As we write, a newspaper item has just come to our attention. A Muslim cleric, speaking at a mosque in the Gaza strip, told the worshippers: "God does not expect you to liberate Palestine yourself. It will take time. But do not despair. Victory will finally be yours. The Koran says that before the Muslims

can triumph, all the Jews must be gathered in Palestine. This so-called 'peace' will encourage many of them to come here now. And when they do, the Muslims around the world will finally assemble, and crush the Israeli state." This could well be part of the predicted flood of Israel's enemies which is to be obliterated, while the woman escapes, and then comes the ensuing worldwide persecution of Jewry.

Having been foiled in his attempt to exterminate the Jews in the land, Satan now vents his wrath on those who are scattered among all nations. While the bulk of the nation is safe and nourished, there will be others, a faithful remnant, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. These are the 144,000 and the multitudes saved through their witness. They will be the object of Satan's attack and most will suffer martyrdom because of their refusal to take the mark of the Beast and to worship his image. However, God will reward them, for they are those who have part in the first resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20:4,6. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon 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.... 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."

Much more could be written about Satan's continued warfare against God and His people, about his stay in the bottomless pit and the reason he is released for a season, and then his final end in hell. These things will be touched upon in following chapters. Many earth-shaking events are yet to take place and Satan will continue for a while with his devilish work, but victory is assured for our God and His Christ, and we know that everything is coming out all right in the end. We know, because we have read the last chapter.

The Two Witnesses

"What are these two olive trees?"

When speaking of the end-time we have particularly in mind that period referred to as the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy. This is a week of seven years. The first three and a half years will be comparatively peaceful, but it will be a false peace. "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" (I Thessalonians 5:3). The last half of the seven years will be that which the Lord called the great tribulation and which, for the elect's sake, will be shortened to three and a half years. This prophesied week does not have to begin immediately after the rapture of the Church. There could be an interval sufficient for the lining up of the nations, the rebuilding of the Jewish temple, and the setting of the stage for the fulfillment of the prophecies pertaining to the seventieth week. We believe in the imminent, or any moment, coming of Christ for the Church and need not look for signs or for certain conditions that might indicate the soon fulfillment of the prophetic Word. We are looking for one thing only; we are "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

In the eleventh chapter of Revelation the two witnesses appear on the scene. Dean Alford made the statement: "This chap-

ter is undoubtedly one of the most difficult in the whole Apocalypse.” The difficulty with him and with others is due to spiritualizing and reading the Church into the text. Dr. Barnhouse has said something about the book of Revelation that needs to be heeded if we would understand it aright. He writes: “The Holy Spirit sheds a revealing light throughout the whole book the moment we recognize first, its essential Jewishness and second, that it is entirely concerned with the future.” In the opening verses of this chapter John is told to measure the temple, which indicates it has already been rebuilt. That it is to be rebuilt is clearly stated in Scripture. In Matthew 24:15 the Lord referred to “the abomination of desolation, spoken by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” and this does show that a future temple would be desecrated by the Antichrist. Also, in II Thessalonians 2:4 Paul writes that Antichrist would be “sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” According to Daniel 9:27, Israel will have made a covenant with Antichrist giving them safety in the land, control of Jerusalem, and the right to rebuild the temple. This covenant will be broken in the middle of the week with disastrous results. God warned of this in Isaiah 28:18 when He said, “And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.”

It is at this particular time, with Israel in the land in unbelief and trusting in their covenant with Antichrist, that God raises up in their midst His two messengers. These two witnesses will for three and a half years bear a testimony for God to an unrepentant world. They will be located in Jerusalem but their message will be heard by all the people, kindreds, tongues and nations mentioned in verse nine. There has been much discussion as to who these witnesses are. First of all, they are two persons, although some try to tell us otherwise. We read: “These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth” (verse 4). These words remind us of Zechariah chapter four. There it is the time of Israel’s restoration following

their captivity in Babylon and the temple is being rebuilt. The prophet sees a golden candlestick and two olive trees and the context indicates these are Zerubbabel the builder and Joshua the high priest. Then the prophet asks the question: "What are these two olive trees?" and it is said, "These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." In the time of Israel's future restoration, with the temple being again rebuilt, the two witnesses in that day will be the anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. Notice the title: The Lord of the whole earth. Satan will be making a final attempt to gain control of the earth, but all his efforts are doomed to failure. When the ministry of the two witnesses is completed and the seventh trumpet is sounded a great cry goes out: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

The Scripture is not explicit in identifying the two witnesses so we are told that we cannot be dogmatic. Dr. Bultema used to tell us we could be dogmatic without being dogmatic. But the Scripture does tell us enough about these two so that this writer is firmly convinced as to their identity. There is agreement among those who seek to identify the witnesses that one of them is Elijah. The Old Testament closes with the statement that Elijah would indeed return before the day of the Lord. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5-6). Some who see Elijah as one of the two pick Enoch as the other. Their main reason is that Elijah and Enoch were two who never died, and since Hebrews 9:27 states it is appointed unto men once to die they must be brought back to suffer death. But a whole generation of saints will have been raptured home to heaven without dying. Also, Lazarus and the other dead who were brought back to life by Jesus and the apostles all died the second time. Further, Hebrews 9:27 has nothing whatever to do with physical death. We quote again from Dr. Barnhouse whose

remarks express so well the view we have always held. He writes: "The simple fact is that the famous text on death and judgment does not refer to physical death at all. In view of the fact that the context clearly speaks of salvation from eternal death, a paraphrase of the misapplied verse in Hebrews would, in my opinion, read as follows: As it is appointed unto men once, in Adam's sin, to die spiritually, as a result of which judgment passed upon all the race, because all have sinned, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." And more to the point regarding Enoch we are again reminded that in order to understand the book of Revelation we must recognize its essential Jewishness. What did Enoch ever have to do with the Jewish nation? The answer is absolutely nothing, for he lived many centuries before Abraham, so any attempt to put him in the end-time, when God is dealing again with Israel, is untenable.

The two witnesses, we believe, are Moses and Elijah, and they will be invincible and invulnerable until their testimony is finished. God will give them wondrous powers to carry out their commission. We read: "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." It was Elijah who called down fire to consume those sent to apprehend him. It was Elijah who prayed and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months, the same time period as this future ministry. It was Moses who turned the waters of Egypt into blood and who called down one plague after another on that land. And it was the two of them, Moses and Elijah, who appeared with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration. Elijah was caught up in a whirlwind when he left this earthly scene and he went up in a body. And there is a bit of a mystery connected with Moses' body. He died, but he had the Divine Undertaker, for the Scripture says, "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the

word of the Lord. And he (the Lord) buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day” (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). Then there is the verse in Jude about Michael the archangel contending with the devil and disputing about the body of Moses. Evidently God wanted Moses’ body for a purpose. The three disciples saw Moses and Elijah in bodily form on the mount, and in that future day they will be in bodily form and witnessing for God in the streets of Jerusalem.

The two witnesses begin their testimony at the beginning of the seventieth week, at a time when the man who is to be the Antichrist is more and more coming to power. At this time he is seen only in his human form and being hailed as a great world leader. We can be sure, though, that Moses and Elijah will be warning the nation Israel of the awful consequences of the alliance they have made with this man, and this will bring his wrath upon them. The fact that Jerusalem is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt indicates the apostate condition of the nation. The clothing of the two witnesses is suggestive of their message, for sackcloth speaks of mourning and repentance. Their message will be similar to that of John the Baptist; a call to repentance because the King is coming, and they will also be preaching the gospel of the kingdom as did John. And just as John pointed people to the Lamb of God, so will they, preaching the cross and salvation through Christ’s shed blood. They will be warning of judgments soon to be visited upon the unrepentant and warning their hearers to flee from the wrath to come. In the main their message will be one of judgment, unlike the message of grace we proclaim today. It is to be further noted that the expectation of those saved during the seventieth week is an earthly kingdom, whereas the destiny of the Church is heavenly. All of this gives further proof that the Church has no part whatever in the tribulation.

In every age the message of God’s servants should concern the person of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible is a

wonderful “HIM” book. It is all about Him. In the Old Testament He is typified and prophesied, in the gospels personified, in the epistles magnified, and in Revelation glorified. The two witnesses will preach Christ, His atoning death and resurrection, that He is alive from the dead, the true Messiah, and coming soon to destroy His foes and take His rightful place as King over all the earth. In Luke 24:26-27 Jesus was showing the two disciples on the Emmaus road that in the Scriptures the law and all the prophets spoke of the things concerning Himself. In the end-time Moses and Elijah, as representatives of the law and the prophets, will be speaking of the things concerning Him who is the Son of God and Israel’s Messiah. There is little doubt that attempts will be made to silence them, but they will have miraculous powers to defeat every attack. The wicked king Ahab blamed Elijah for the trouble that had come upon Israel, when it was his own sin and the sin of the nation that was responsible. So the world will blame the two witnesses for all the trouble that has come upon them, unwilling to admit that the trouble and distress is due to their own sin and wickedness. When the witnesses shut heaven that it rain not, and famine is widespread, they will be hated the more; and when they turn into blood the little water that is left, all the earthdwellers will clamor for their destruction. But God’s hand will be upon them and they will be deathless until their testimony is completed. It should encourage us to know that even today the enemy of our souls cannot touch one of the Lord’s children without His permission.

With all the hellish weapons of destruction man has devised, some powerful enough to blow cities off the map, it would seem they would have an easy time in disposing of the two witnesses. But God will have an easier time in bringing all their efforts to nought. When God’s time has come, and not a moment before, He will allow them to be killed. We read: “And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast ... shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the peo-

ple and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth” (Revelation 11:7-10). These messengers, faithful unto death, will not be given a decent burial, but their bodies will lie in the street. As news of their death spreads around the world and as people look upon the scene by means of television there will be great rejoicing. Thousands will line up in Jerusalem to pass by their bodies and to curse them in death. For three and a half days there will be a great carnival atmosphere with merrymaking and sending of gifts. They are rejoicing because the ones who have troubled them, the ones who have stood in the way of the superman and prevented him from carrying out his grandiose plans for them, are now dead. But suddenly, in the midst of their rejoicing, something happens. Life returns to the two witnesses and they stand upon their feet. The frolic of the worldlings turns to fright and fear. A great voice is heard, saying, “Come up hither,” and the two witnesses ascend up to heaven in a cloud. Sometimes the judgments of God are delayed, but not in this case. “And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand; and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven” (verse 13). And worse judgments are yet to come. That which the Lord called the great tribulation, the great and dreadful day of the Lord, is about to begin.

As always, God has given assurance that His Word will not return unto Him void, and the preaching of the two witnesses will not have been in vain. The remnant referred to in the foregoing verse, who gave glory to the God of heaven, are Jews in Judea and Jerusalem who were converted through the testimony of the two witnesses. With Satan soon to be cast down and with the Antichrist as his tool, these Jews will be forced to flee as the Lord predicted in Matthew 24:15-21. They will be protected by

God in their hasty flight and providentially cared for in the wilderness, a sanctuary from the fearful storm raging in the world around. Also, it is doubtless due to the preaching of the witnesses that the 144,000 Israelites among the nations have been converted and made bold. And now, empowered by the Spirit of God, they will refuse to take the mark of the beast and with the seal of God in their foreheads, will go forth as Apostle Pauls to evangelize the Gentile world. The witness of the two faithful warriors has been far from fruitless. Even today, as we consider the brief account of their labors, we are challenged and given fresh courage to stand for God and for Christ even in hard places and under trying circumstances.

The Tribulation Saints

"What are these which are arrayed in white robes?"

The question has sometimes been asked as to whether, prior to the Rapture, there would be a great revival with many turning to God and trusting in Christ. We know that with God all things are possible. He can do as He chooses at any time or under any circumstances. However, the Scripture says nothing about revival at the end of the Church age, but quite the opposite. The inspired apostle wrote that in the last days of this age of grace, perilous times would come, with men being lovers of their own selves and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Instead of things getting better, evil men and seducers would wax worse and worse, deceiving others and themselves being deceived. It would be a time when men would no longer endure sound doctrine; they would turn away their ears from the truth and be turned to fables. Sadly, we see evidence of all this in the world around us today, and it is like a poison gas that has affected many true believers who are lukewarm and negligent in their service for Christ. It is not only the unsaved who have turned away their ears from the truth, but how few Christians

there are who have an anointed ear, and a sincere desire for the things of God and for the Word of truth. A dear servant of the Lord wrote: “The number of those who give any place at all in their thoughts and lives to the Word of God is rapidly diminishing. The little circle of those who give any heed at all to God’s Word is steadily contracting. That is one side of the case, the dark side. But there is another side, namely that within that little circle the light is becoming clearer and fuller.”

There will indeed be a great worldwide spiritual awakening, a great ingathering of souls, but that will take place after the Church has been raptured home to glory. The Great Tribulation will be a time when the judgments of God are poured out and also when Antichrist will be on the scene, but it will be the greatest soul-saving time ever witnessed by mankind. In the seventh chapter of Revelation we read of the tribulation saints, those saved during that time. There are two groups: 1) The 144,000 who are all Israelites, and 2) an innumerable multitude out of all nations, mainly Gentiles. God has always had a witness. In every age He has had those who have spoken for Him, and the Great Tribulation will be no exception. He will have 144,000 saved, sealed, separated, stalwart witnesses who will proclaim God’s Word and the result of their preaching will be a great multitude, which no man could number, brought to God and washed in the blood of the Lamb.

In Revelation chapter six, the judgment seals are being opened but now there is an interruption. We read: “And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. 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” (7:2-4). Who are these who are sealed? Some of the cults claim they or some of their number are the 144,000, but this is

nonsense. Then there are those who say these are the Church and this is also nonsensical. God tells us clearly and plainly who they are. They are all Israelites, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and they are twelve thousand from each one of the twelve tribes of Israel. For anyone to say otherwise is reason enough to reject and discredit their ministry. A little boy sat in a service and heard the preacher explaining that a Bible passage meant something altogether different from what was written. On the way home he said to his mother, "Mom, if God didn't mean what He said, then why didn't He say what He meant?" Beloved, God has said exactly what He meant. Seiss writes: "There is no vice or device of sacred hermeneutics, which so beclouds the Scriptures, and so unsettles the faith of man, as this attempt to read Church for Israel, and Christian people for Jewish tribes. As I read the Bible, when God says 'children of Israel,' I do not understand Him to mean any but people of Jewish blood."

These Israelites, who will be the real Jehovah's witnesses, were certainly saved before they were sealed. The disappearance of millions from the earth at the Rapture would occasion wonder on the part of many. The seal judgments would bring universal war, famine, disease and death, followed by great earthquakes and men praying for the rocks to fall on them and to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. These strange events would certainly speak to the hearts of these Israelites, reminding them of Jehovah-God and of His promises to their nation. No one is saved, of course, apart from faith and the hearing of the Word of God. One of the ways for them to hear the Word would be through the preaching of the two witnesses at Jerusalem. The testimony of these two witnesses would be heard, not simply in Jerusalem, but throughout the world by means of television and radio. They would also still have the written Word and the Holy Spirit would use it to bring them to the knowledge of salvation and their sealing for service.

Following the Rapture of the Church, the Lord resumes His

dealings with Israel and He singles out and seals the 144,000. Back in the days of Ezekiel's prophecy the nation Israel had turned away from Jehovah and gone into idolatry and abominable practices, and because of their wickedness God was forced to send judgment. But first certain were marked out to be spared. We read: "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark" (Ezekiel 9:4-6). These chosen Israelites of the future will be like those sealed in Ezekiel's day. As they see the abomination of desolation and the rising power of Antichrist, they will be sighing and crying out to the God of their fathers to intervene. They will be sealed with the seal of the living God. This seal will be visible and will not only denote their authority to act for God, but it will also render them deathless, at least until their ministry is completed. Elijah pictures these end-time believers. For three and a half years he was cared for by God and protected from the wrath of Ahab. For three and a half years the 144,000 will be cared for by God and protected from the wrath of Antichrist. And they will not only be sealed and protected, but also empowered by the Holy Spirit. On the Day of Pentecost there was a partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) and God's Spirit was poured out and twelve men preached and several thousand were saved. In that future time there will be the complete fulfillment of Joel's prophecy and God's Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh and the 144,000 will preach and innumerable thousands will be saved.

Where will God find these witnesses? Will they have to be recruited and spend many months learning the language of the nations to whom they will bear a testimony? No, the Jew is already in every country of the world. They know the language of

the country in which they reside. Many of them occupy prominent positions in the business world, in education, music, finance, and politics, and they will also have the money to do the job. We talk about the ten lost tribes, but they are not lost as far as God is concerned. He knows where they all are, and in Jewry today there are no doubt members of all the twelve tribes. These Jews, twelve thousand from each tribe and confessing Jesus as Messiah and coming King, will go to the Gentiles with God's salvation message. This is God's prophesied program, which is blessing for Israel first and then the Gentiles blessed through Israel. Dr. Scofield writes: "How long would it take Israel to evangelize the earth? A sober and very conservative estimate which has been made shows that it would be possible for these Israelites to carry any particular message to every creature on this earth in three years if they wanted to. I have always loved God's ancient people, and I rejoice to know from the prophets that this mission is a part of their glorious future."

The 144,000 mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation are doubtless the same ones referred to in chapter seven. In 14:4 they are called virgins, mainly in a spiritual sense. In the Old Testament God charged His people with spiritual adultery, which was most heinous in His sight. God was a faithful husband to Israel but they were unfaithful and went whoring after the gods of the heathen round about. The 144,000 will be faithful followers of the Lamb and will not be sullied by the idolatrous and wicked practices connected with the worship of the Beast. In connection with that iniquitous worship, which will in effect be Satan worship, fornication will be a part of it, even as it formed a part of the pagan system of idolatry. In Revelation 9:21 God mentions this fornication as one of the sins which brought His judgment upon them. In that day man will use religion as an excuse in which to gratify the lusts of the flesh. The great prominence given to sex and perversion today is a harbinger of that which is to come. The 144,000 are referred to as virgins because they keep themselves unspotted from all this. James had this future time in mind when he wrote: "Ye adulter-

ers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (4:4).

In the same verse (Revelation 14:4) the 144,000 are spoken of as “being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.” Quoting again from James, written to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,” we read “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (1:18). Passingly, we would say that just as Paul’s epistles have their primary application to God’s people today, so the circumcision epistles (Peter-James-John) will have their primary application in the end-time when God takes up again with Israel. One of Israel’s feasts was the feast of firstfruits when they would bring a sheaf of firstfruits and offer a lamb without blemish (Leviticus 23:10-12). Here in Revelation we have the firstfruits and the Lamb with them. As the firstfruits these Israelites are chosen ahead of the nation and they are a pledge or guarantee of the redemption of all Israel, “for if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy” (Romans 11:16). These 144,000 Israelites, plus the thousands saved from among the nations by their witness, will have part in the first resurrection. The Apostle John wrote: “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” (Revelation 20:4-5).

The 144,000 are not the only ones to be saved and kept during the Great Tribulation. We are now introduced to a vast company of Gentiles out of all nations who are also saved during the Tribulation. In the seventh chapter of the Revelation, John says: “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. ... These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (vs. 9,14). These are the sheep nations of Matthew 25. They received the witness of the 144,000 and believed to the saving of their souls. They also received the witnesses and fed them, clothed them, befriended them, and thus will inherit the kingdom. Since these were saved through the preaching of the 144,000 it would be well to consider the message preached by the latter. There is no need to speculate as their preaching was foretold by the Lord Jesus. In Matthew 24:14, He said: “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.” What did they preach? The Lord said it would be “the gospel of the kingdom.” It will not be the gospel of the grace of God, which we preach today, but the gospel of the kingdom. When the Church has been removed from this scene by way of the rapture, God’s program will revert to that which was in effect before He brought in the dispensation of grace with the Apostle Paul. The 144,000 will again be preaching the gospel of the kingdom. They will be preaching Jesus as the Son of God and the true Messiah who will be coming soon as King to set up His prophesied kingdom and to reign in righteousness over all the earth.

Certainly the 144,000 will also be preaching Christ and His redemptive work as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Their converts are seen as “they which have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” No one in any age has been saved apart from the precious shed blood of Calvary’s Lamb. However, those saved during the tribulation will not be saved to become members of the Body of Christ with a heavenly hope. Theirs will be an earthly kingdom hope. In fact, both here, in chapter seven of Revelation, and also in chapter fourteen is an earthly millennial scene. Revelation 7:15 reads: “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in

his temple.” Dr. Ironside has written: “That is, I take it, the millennial temple, which is to be built in the land in that coming day. There will be no day and night in Heaven. The expression can only refer, in this connection, to the temple on earth.” In Revelation 14:1 the Lamb with the 144,000 is seen standing on Mount Zion, which is mentioned over a hundred times in the Old Testament. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psalm 48:2). It is here the great King will be enthroned during the Millennium.

It is truly cause for praise that during the world’s darkest hour a great host will be brought to the Light and will shine for Christ in His kingdom. But a word of warning should be sounded lest any think they can turn a deaf ear to God’s offer of salvation today, be left behind at the Rapture, and then have another opportunity to be saved in the Great Tribulation. Dr. Lehman Strauss writes: “I do not believe that this throng has in it any who reject Christ in this present dispensation of grace. Those who deliberately reject the love of the truth in this age are without hope in the coming age.” It would appear that those saved during the tribulation will be those who had never truly had the opportunity to hear the gospel and to put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Antichrist

“Who is like unto the beast?”

It has been said that the book of Daniel is a commentary on the book of Revelation, and that Revelation is a commentary on Daniel. Certainly these two books should be studied together when dealing with the prophetic Word. It is interesting, though, that in neither of these books is the word “antichrist” used. There is reference to him, the infamous character of the end-time, but that particular designation is not used. It is only in the epistles of John that we have the word used. This word “antichrist” could mean either of two things: 1) As being against Christ, or 2) taking the place of Christ. Both will be true of the Antichrist of the end-time, He will be against the true Christ, and also in demanding the worship of men will be attempting to take Christ’s place.

In thinking of the Antichrist it should be firmly fixed in our minds that we are considering a person. The prophet Daniel writes: “A king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many; he shall also stand up against

the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand” (8:23-25). In these verses the personal pronoun is used eleven times, and we could look at other verses where it is used many more times. These descriptions and actions would not make sense if they were not attributed to a person. And Jesus was surely referring to a person when He said, “I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (John 5:43).

As the seventieth week begins, this man will have already risen to a place of prominence in world affairs. He will be seen as a master statesman and a skilled negotiator and peacemaker. He will not come to the fore as a wild Hitler but will have charisma, be a great communicator, and popular with the masses. He will have the answer to many of the problems that plague the nations, and will have a solution for the Arab-Israeli dispute, posing as Israel’s benefactor and protector. By his political adroitness he will have so gained the confidence of men that certain nations, which have formed a federation, will make him their leader and give him power to act on their behalf. This federation is the revived Roman Empire. In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream image the legs of iron represent the Roman Empire. The feet with ten toes of iron and clay represent the revived Empire. Between the legs and the feet there has been a break during which God has brought in the dispensation of grace. After this break there will be a ten-toed kingdom, and Daniel 7:7-8 has reference to this very thing. Here we read: “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast. ... And it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.” Here we have the final form of Gentile power. Scofield says: “The vision is of the end of Gentile world-dominion. The former Roman empire will have ten horns (i.e. kings) corresponding to the ten toes of the image.” The ten horns are ten

kings, or nations, mainly European, who will make him, the little horn, the veritable Emperor. He will be the iron while the federated nations, maintaining some semblance of autonomy, will be the clay. It would appear that three of the nations may have second thoughts, but will be put down in the Emperor's rise to power. This Empire will encompass the territory occupied by ancient Rome and go even beyond. There will not only be political power behind the Antichrist, but religious power as well. Left behind at the Rapture will be an apostate church, or religious system, which he will use to solidify his position, and when it is of no further use he will turn and destroy it. Jennings, one of the Brethren writers, has this to say: "We are compelled to see that the boundaries of the Empire will be the boundaries of the professed, but utterly apostate Christianity, and it follows beyond all question, that the revived Roman Empire will include every country everywhere in which there is any claim to apostate Christianity at all, and so, will include North and South America."

The first three and a half years of the week will certainly be most stressful. This time was foreseen when the Lord said there would be "upon the earth distress of nations ... men's hearts failing them for fear." The four horsemen have been loosed with resultant war, famine, death, and earthquakes. Jesus predicted all this in His Olivet discourse when He said: "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 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. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places." All this is frightening enough, but then He added, "All these are the beginning of sorrows." In other words, the worst is yet to come. This is true here, for the next three and a half years will be a time of trouble unparalleled in human history. Here in the middle of the week certain things happen that presage the storm that is to be visited upon mankind. This is the beginning of the Great Tribulation. First, the

two witnesses are removed from the scene. For three and a half years they have been withstanding the Antichrist, though he has not yet been revealed as such, but now the two are gone and the world rejoices. Next, Satan, with his minions, is evicted from the heavens and cast down to earth. He comes down having great wrath and looks for an instrument through whom he may work in destroying Israel and defeating the purposes of God. In Revelation 13:1 a wild beast is seen coming up out of the sea. The sea in Scripture is descriptive of the restless nations and this one, rising up out of the nations, is a Gentile. He is the head of the federated nations, the revived empire. Satan sees in him the instrument he can use in carrying on his warfare against the hated Creator.

When our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, was here in the flesh He was tempted of the devil. “And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine” (Luke 4:5-7). Satan offered Christ all the kingdoms of the world and Christ firmly refused. Now Satan makes the same offer to the Beast out of the sea and he accepts what Christ rejected. Satan gives him his power, and his throne, and great authority. Here also another person comes on stage. In the Olivet discourse the Lord not only spoke of the Antichrist who was to come but He also warned of false prophets. In Revelation 13:11 another beast is seen, this one coming up out of the earth. He is most likely a Jew and is the False Prophet. Satan always seeks to imitate God and here we have a trinity, a trinity of evil in contrast to the Holy Trinity. The Antichrist sets himself up in the temple, masquerading as God, and the False Prophet causes all the earthdwellers to worship him. This worship of the Antichrist is in reality the worship of Satan, which the old serpent has long desired.

Before continuing with the diabolical reign of the Antichrist

we need to consider the question: Will he be a resurrected individual? Many expositors teach that he will gain a massive following after he has experienced death and then been resurrected by Satan. Some teach that he will be Judas Iscariot raised from the dead. Revelation 13:3 reads: "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed; and all the world wondered after the beast." Also verse 12 speaks of the "first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." We cannot feel these verses have reference to the death and resurrection of an individual, for we cannot believe Satan has, or ever will have, the power to give life. Christ alone is the Prince of life, or Author of life. True, He did give the apostles the power, in His name, to raise the dead, but He would never delegate this authority to Satan. The references to death and resurrection refer to the Roman Empire, once dead, but now revived and once again with a head. The Beast is the Emperor and is the epitome, or embodiment, of the Empire. We quote a few prominent writers on the subject. Scofield says, "It was the imperial form of government which ceased; the one head wounded to death. What we have prophetically in Revelation 13:3 is the restoration of the imperial form as such, though over a federated empire of ten kingdoms; the 'head' is 'healed,' i.e. restored; there is an emperor again<197>the Beast." William Pettingill says, "In the third verse we saw one of the Beast's heads as healed after a mortal wound. The Roman Empire has been reckoned dead by the world for centuries. It will be revived, and it will have a head, that is an Emperor. His pomp and power will amaze the world, and the world will be called upon to worship him." Dr. Pentecost writes, "The question arises then as to whether this is a resurrected individual in whom the miracle of Christ's death and resurrection is imitated. Even though it is said that this one comes to power by satanic activity, and is said to have a deadly wound that was healed, and comes out of the abyss, it seems best not to understand this as death and resurrection for several reasons. In Revelation 13:3 and 17:8 the beast is explained as the composite kingdom. The reference to the healing seems to be the resurgence of power in the Gentile kingdom that had been

dead for so long. ... The Scriptures reveal that men are brought out of the grave by the voice of the Son of God. Satan does not have the power to give life. Since Christ alone has the power of resurrection, Satan could not bring one back to life.”

With Satan cast down to earth and going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, the world is in for the worst time of trouble ever experienced by mankind. The Antichrist is revealed, a man sold out to the devil, who now takes over Jerusalem and breaks the covenant he has made with Israel. He sets himself up in the temple, claiming to be deity, and all are forced to worship him. This is the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel and of which the Lord warned. An image of the Beast is erected, perhaps in the temple in the place of the mercy seat, showing disdain for God. The False Prophet gives breath (pneuma) to this robotic image and by legerdemain or trickery, people are deceived into thinking it a living being. All are commanded to worship the image and those who refuse to do so are killed. It will be a time of great suffering under the despotic rule of the Antichrist, but in addition to this the vials of the wrath of God will be poured out, for God will no longer be speaking in grace but in wrath. Yet in spite of all the trouble and tribulation most are still unrepentant. Instead they “blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory” (Revelation 16:9). But God will have His own elect and they will be the objects of Antichrist’s hatred. “It was given unto him to make war with the saints.” These are not the saints of the present dispensation, members of Christ’s Body, for they will have long since been removed from earth by way of the Rapture.

At midpoint in the seventieth week, with the casting down of Satan and the emergence of Antichrist, the 144,000 are galvanized into action. Filled with the Spirit of God, they will do in forty-two months what the Church has failed to do in twenty centuries; that is to evangelize the world. The multitudes saved through their testimony will be the saints who bear the brunt of

Antichrist's persecution. The 144,000 witnesses will carry on their ministry for three and a half years in spite of all that may be done to stop them. They have the seal of God, His mark, in their foreheads. Satan is the great imitator so now the decree goes forth that everyone must take the mark of the Beast in their right hand or in their foreheads. Those without the mark will be unable to buy or sell, thus unable to deal in the necessities of life. This will add much more to the trials of the saints, but God will surely have ways to sustain them. It is then that the so-called Lord's Prayer will have its proper place and the saints will pray with real meaning, "Give us this day our daily bread." Then the Shepherd Psalm will be most pertinent as God prepares a table before them in the presence of their enemies. The epistles of John, like those of Peter and James, were not written to the saints of this present dispensation. They have in view and will be of particular value to the saints of the end-time during the Tribulation. In one of these epistles, 1st John, we read: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it" (5:16). Strange indeed are the comments of some expositors in explaining this verse. It has reference to one certain sin, a sin that is visible and recognizable. It is the sin of taking the mark of the Beast. Those who take his mark seal their doom and will spend eternity in the lake of fire with the Antichrist, the false prophet, and Satan.

For a brief season Satan will have his day as the people worship the Beast and worship the dragon which gave power unto the Beast. Millions will be deceived by demon spirits coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the Beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet (Revelation 16:13). What a trinity of evil. In 2nd Thessalonians we see why people can be deceived and deluded. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2:11). What is the reason for which they were given over to believe a (the) lie? "They received not the love of the truth, that

they might be saved” (2:10). What a terrible thing to turn away from the truth. Light rejected brings darkness and the result is “that they all might be damned who believed not the truth” (2:12). The monstrous lie of the future will be the setting up of a man and the worship of that man as God. Sadly, we see the world preparing even now for such worship. The dethronement of God and the deification of man is the world’s intent. An eminent servant of the Lord wrote many years ago: “Religions are in the air in our own day; and in each there is less and less of God. In the new religion that is coming, God will be entirely left out, and man exalted.” Indeed, much of the preaching we hear today, even in fundamental circles, is about man rather than about our God and His Christ.

The trinity of evil will be at work during that time yet future. Satan, the liar from the beginning, will be carrying on his devilish work, the false Christ will be causing men to take his mark and to worship him, and just as the Holy Spirit of God directs the worship of men toward the true Christ, so the false prophet will be directing the worship of men toward Antichrist. This Antichrist, the beast out of the sea, though ruthless in suppressing the truth and making war with the saints, yet will be hailed by the masses as a savior and benefactor of mankind. His reign will be Satan’s brief millennium. It will be a time of peace and progress. Secrets of nature will be discovered and great inventions will be made and put to man’s account. But this rule of Antichrist will be of brief duration, for when they are saying peace and safety then sudden destruction will come upon them. His rule will be terminated by the personal return of the rightful Ruler, the Lord Jesus Christ, who comes to put all His foes under His feet. The unholy trinity will here be judged. Antichrist and the false prophet will meet their final end in the lake of fire. Satan will be cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years and then will join them in the lake of fire.

At the close of the 13th chapter of Revelation we have these words so that the saints of the end-time may recognize the Beast

for what he really is: “Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.” Much has been written and there has been a great deal of speculation as to the meaning of this number 666. The verse explains itself for it states “it is the number of a man.” Seven is the number of perfection and associated with Deity. Here is a man who says he is God, but his number is six, the number of a man, and it will never be seven. String out as many sixes as you please and it always comes short, the number of man, a miserable creature of the dust. Archibald Wright, pastor of Newtownards Presbyterian Church in Ireland, said significantly: “It is ever short of the perfect seven, showing that however the Beast king may attempt to show himself as God he will fail to deceive the elect. It may seem strange that the world with all its wisdom and culture could be so deceived by the Man of Sin and be led to worship such a character but it all becomes clear when we remember that man by wisdom never knew God.”

Armageddon

"And who shall be able to stand?"

There are four A's of the end-time. 1) The Apostasy, a departure from the faith once delivered to the saints. 2) The Antichrist, the greatest apostasy of all, the renouncement of God and the worship of man. 3) Armageddon, the gathering of the nations to their destruction. 4) The Advent, the glorious return of the King of kings, who comes to vanquish all His foes and to take the throne.

When we think of Armageddon the question arises as to who will be doing the fighting. In the Olivet discourse the Lord said, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars ... For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:6,7). Who are these nations and kingdoms? Will the rule of Antichrist be worldwide? Revelation 13:8 does state that all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, except those whose names are written in the book of life. However, Scripture clearly teaches that the Roman empire, headed by Antichrist, will have powerful enemies. There will be four great world powers in the end-time. 1) The revived Roman empire, a ten kingdom federation with Antichrist at its head. This is the Western world including Europe and the Americas. 2) The Northern confederacy described in Ezekiel 38, which is Russia and her allies, including Iran (Persia), peoples north of the Black

and Caspian Seas, and perhaps Germany and Turkey. 3) The Kings of the East. These are the populous nations of Asia. 4) The King of the South. Most believe this has reference to Egypt and other nations in the north of Africa. Regarding these great forces, reference is often made to the battle of Armageddon, whereas Scripture refers to it as “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:14). Also, the Greek word for battle (polemos) does not refer to a single battle but to a campaign, a series of battles over the three and a half year period. The prophetic Word reveals the movements of the four great forces during this time. We cannot consider these movements in detail but will endeavor to give a possible sequence of events.

The beginning of the Great Tribulation, the time of Jacob’s trouble, is occasioned by the casting down of Satan out of heaven and perhaps his first act against Israel is to move the King of the North to invade Israel. Having put their confidence in man instead of in the God of their fathers, Israel will have made a covenant with the Beast, who guarantees their protection, and they will have been lulled to sleep, thinking that peace has finally come to their troubled land. They will appear to the northern confederacy to be an easy target. The King of the North says: “I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey” (Ezekiel 38:11-12). In the two chapters of Ezekiel, 38 and 39, the invasion from the north is graphically described. As the northern armies come down on the land, the Antichrist, prince of the Roman Empire, makes a feeble protest (38:13) but does nothing more to aid Israel, thus breaking the covenant made with them. But God will do something, a work so great He will be magnified in the eyes of the nations (38:23) and a work so mighty that the house of Israel will know that He is the Lord their God from that day and forward (39:22). The invading hosts will fall on the mountains of Israel and will be annihilated by great convulsions of nature. There will be a great earthquake such as was never seen before, with islands and mountains disappearing, and great hail out of

heaven. The destruction of the invading hosts will be complete and it will take seven months to bury the dead and clear up the devastation.

It would appear the King of the South moves in concert with the King of the North in their invasion of Israel's land. Daniel 11:40 reads: "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him; and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind." The northern army, Russia and her confederates, being smitten of the Lord, the Beast-king turns his attention to the southern intruder and has little trouble in destroying him. It is then that the Beast and his armies move into Palestine and take over all the surrounding territory. It is then that he sets himself up in the temple of God, shewing himself as God and demanding that all take his mark and worship him. But while extending his domain into Egypt and Africa a report comes that causes alarm. "But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him" (Daniel 11:44). Perhaps the tidings that trouble him are that the Kings of the East are preparing to march against him. These Asiatic powers, disturbed that the Beast has taken over the Middle East and fearful of his plans, band together and move to challenge his authority.

The hand of God is in all this. We read that "the Lord hath a controversy with the nations" (Jeremiah 25:31) and He is gathering the nations together for the final showdown. He says: "Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about. ... Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get ye down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:11-14). God is bringing the nations to judgment. In fact, He miraculously dries up the waters of the river Euphrates to make a way for the eastern armies to invade Palestine (Revelation 16:12). Also we read: "And he gathered

them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (vs. 16). This is the only mention of the name Armageddon in the Bible. It has reference to the Mount of Megiddo in north central Palestine and is referred to elsewhere as the plain of Esdraelon. In view of the size of the armies involved, and in view of other Scriptures relating to this great climactic battle, it seems evident that the battle would not be confined to the valley of Megiddo. Ezekiel states that the armies would “cover the land,” the entire land of Palestine.

With the King of the South defeated and the northern hosts destroyed by the Lord, we now find two armies opposed to each other and ready for battle. They are the armies of the Beast and the armies of the East. But before any action begins they are interrupted by another invading host, and this invasion comes from above. This is described in Revelation 19 where the Apostle John writes: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. ... And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (vs. 11,14). The two armies that had gathered to fight one another now join forces to fight this new threat. John says: “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army” (vs. 19). Puny man, who presumes to fight against the Almighty, and thinks he can prevail. The Rider on the white horse is none other than the meek and lowly Jesus returning as King of kings and Lord of lords, and though accompanied by the armies of heaven, He needs not their help in disposing of His foes. Speaking of that future day He has said: “I have trodden the winepress alone ... for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments” (Isaiah 63:3). It was alone that He dealt with the sin of man at Calvary and it will be alone that He deals with sinful man at His return. The cry goes out to the fowls of the air to come and feast on the corpses of His enemies. “For the indigna-

tion of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies; he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter” (34:2). He will not then be the Victim but the mighty Victor. It will indeed be “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

The nations (heathen) had long ago, by their wickedness and idolatry, declared war against God and He was forced to turn away from them. It was then He raised up a new nation, the nation Israel. But they were no better and by their departure from God’s law, and by their rejection and murder of Christ, they also, in reality, declared war against God. But God, instead of issuing a counter declaration of war, declared a moratorium and brought in the day of grace. Instead of declaring war, He has declared an amnesty and has sent forth His ambassadors with a message of reconciliation. The day is soon coming, though, when He will recall His ambassadors, the Church, by way of the Rapture, and begin the process of bringing His enemies to His feet. It is then He comes to Armageddon to make war. The defeat of the nations at Armageddon will bring an end to “the times of the Gentiles.” It will mark the end of “man’s day” and the ushering in of “the day of the Lord.” Man has had plenty of opportunity and has always proved a failure. It has been noted that six is the number of man and he has had six days, of one thousand years each, to demonstrate that he is incapable of governing himself. The seventh day of one thousand years will be the great day of the Lord, a sabbath of rest when the earth will enjoy peace and a righteous rule.

EPILOGUE

Dealing with the events of the end-time, the Great Tribulation period, one is forced to paint a dark and gloomy picture. In fact, God Himself so describes it in these words: “That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Zephaniah 1:15). Those who spiritualize and seek to explain away the plain statements of the Word accuse us of being pessimists. The fact of the matter is that we are optimists. We look beyond the gloom of the present and beyond the storm clouds of the coming judgment, and we anticipate that day when the Sun of Righteousness will arise on the world’s horizon with healing in His wings. Christ, the Bright and Morning Star, is coming to bring in the times of restitution of all things. He is coming to straighten out man’s mess and to set all things right.

While the Church of the mystery, Christ’s Body, is not in the prophetic picture, it seems likely that as the dispensation of grace runs out, we would see the shadows of things to come. Even today, as one listens to the world news, it is a sordid picture of human sin and suffering. One hears of acts of terrorism, innocent people being tortured and killed, children dying of starvation, war and strife all around the globe, of wanton murders in our own society, to say nothing of the drug menace, the abortion evil, the increase in crime, the decline in moral standards, etc., etc. Plenty of bad news, but this should not surprise the student of God’s Word, for there we are told that perilous, or ferocious, times would come. Sin and lawlessness will increase, until the sin of man culminates in the man of sin and the end-time judgments.

Just as the current of a river quickens as it approaches a cataract, until with a mighty roar it goes over the precipice, so the current of wickedness in this world will quicken until, with a mighty roar, it will go over the brink.

This age is rushing on to judgment, the terrible judgments of the Great Tribulation. The ship of state is sinking and we are not to think we can save the doomed vessel, either by reformation, education, or legislation. We are to warn men of their peril, to get them off the sinking ship and into the lifeboat, and that Lifeboat is Christ. This does not mean running away from the responsibilities of our time and place. As good citizens we should use our influence for God and for good in this dark scene, but in dealing with the social problems around us, we should make certain we are not acting in the flesh but motivated by the Holy Spirit.

Now, here is good news. Opposed to the abounding sin in the world is the superabounding grace of God. This is an evil age, but it is also the age in which God is dispensing grace. Mercy's door is still wide open and whosoever will may come. God is willing to save any sinner who will come, who will cast his deadly doing down and put his trust alone in the Lord Jesus Christ and the work He accomplished at Calvary. There He suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. The believing sinner is placed in Him, God's judgment-proof Ark of safety. As ambassadors for Christ let us be making this good news known.