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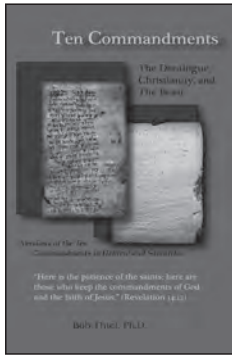


The
Great Tribulation
& Final Time of the Gentiles

Christmas?
Not for me

**The First
Commandment**
Do you really love
God as you should?

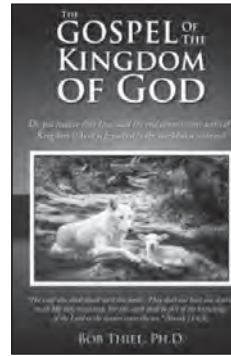
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CHRISTMAS: NOT FOR ME.

Most who profess to be Christian, celebrate Christmas. It is normally observed on December 25th for those in the West, whereas it is January 7th for many in the East. Those who keep it claim that they are celebrating Jesus' birth.

The Bible, itself, never endorses the celebration of birthdays, including that of Jesus. The early Church of Rome did not celebrate Christmas nor any other birthday. Birthday observances were still condemned in the late 3rd century by Arnobius (Against the Heathen, Book I, Chapter 64).

Early Christians did not celebrate Christmas.

Furthermore, Tertullian (the claimed "father of Latin theology,") warned that to participate in the winter celebrations with wreaths and gift-giving made one beholding to pagan gods. In his time, there was one such celebration known as the Saturnalia that was celebrated by the heathen in late December.

Tertullian denounced winter celebrations, such as Saturnalia (from a pagan deity whose name meant plentiful) which morphed into Christmas as he wrote:

The Minervalia are as much Minerva's, as the Saturnalia Saturn's; Saturn's, which must necessarily be celebrated even by little slaves at the time of the Saturnalia. New-year's gifts likewise must be caught at, and the Septimontium kept; and all the presents of Midwinter and the feast of Dear Kinsmanship must be exacted; the schools must be wreathed with flowers; the flamens' wives and the aediles sacrifice; the school is honoured on the appointed holy-days. The same thing takes place on an idol's birthday; every pomp of the devil is frequented. Who will think that these things are befitting to a Christian master, unless it be he who shall

think them suitable likewise to one who is not a master? (Tertullian. On Idolatry, Chapter X)

Around the time of Tertullian, the Roman Bishops Zephyrinus (199-217) and Callistus (217-222) had a reputation of compromise and corruption (and this is confirmed by such Roman Catholic saints such as Hippolytus (Hippolytus. Refutation of All Heresies, Book IX, Chapter VI) and allowed people in their church that compromised with paganism, etc.

The Roman Saturnalia and the Persian Mithraism themselves were adaptations of an even earlier pagan religion – that of the ancient Babylonian mystery cult. The ancient Babylonians celebrated the reborn Nimrod as the newborn Tammuz by worshipping an evergreen tree. The Bible condemns worship involving evergreen trees (Deuteronomy 12:2-3; Jeremiah 3:13; 10:2-6).

The Babylonians also celebrated a rebirth of the sun during the season of the winter solstice. December 25th was eventually chosen as the date of Jesus' birthday, because the Saturnalia and other sun god worship happened at that time of the year:

In 354 A.D., Bishop Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate on December 25. He probably chose this date because the people of Rome already observed it as the Feast of Saturn, celebrating the birthday of the sun. (Sechrist EH. Christmas. World Book Encyclopedia, Volume 3. Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, Chicago, 1966, pp. 408-417)

Helios Mithras is one god...Sunday was kept holy in honour of Mithra, and the sixteenth of each month was sacred to him as mediator. **The 25 December was observed as his birthday, the natalis invicti, the rebirth of the winter-**

sun, unconquered by the rigours of the season. (Arendzen J. Mithraism. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume X. Nihil Obstat, October 1, 1911)

A few decades before Liberius made it official, Emperor Constantine had been a follower of the sun-god Mithras. Mithras was considered to be the unconquered sun and was one born from a rock in a below ground cave. Perhaps because of this, his mother Helena decide to believe the myth that Jesus was born in a below ground rocky cave.

Rome now teaches this (and this author has seen that 'nativity' displayed multiple times in Vatican City), but in the third century one of its supporters, Commodianus, condemned the rock deity:

The unconquered one was born from a rock, if he is regarded as a god. Now tell us, then, on the other hand, which is the first of these two. The rock has overcome the god: then the creator of the rock has to be sought after. Moreover, you still depict him also as a thief; although, if he were a god, he certainly did not live by theft. Assuredly he was of earth, and of a monstrous nature. And he turned other people's oxen into his caves; just as did Cacus, that son of Vulcan. (Commodianus. On Christian Discipline)

Jesus was not born from a rock, yet that is partially how His birth is now portrayed. It is also not true to teach that He was born on December 25th. Scholars recognize that shepherds would not have been out with their flocks in the field (like the Bible shows in Luke 2:8) as late as December 25th and that the biblically-mentioned (Luke 2:1-5) "census would have been impossible in winter" (Christmas. The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1908).

Many of the practices and customs associated with Christmas come from paganism as real scholars will admit. Neither Jesus' apostles nor their early followers observed Christmas.

Repackaged Pagan Holidays

While the Bible does not prohibit secular holidays (like sober "independence" day observances), early Christians did NOT pray to dead saints nor observe

anything like Christmas.

Some of the pagan practices may have changed, but the repackaged demonic holidays are still not Christian, nor are they those that Jesus and His early followers kept. Many holidays that people keep came from paganism and even have ties to the ancient Babylonian mystery religion. When God sent Nehemiah to help the children of Israel who had been influenced by Babylon, notice what Nehemiah said he did:

30 I cleansed them of everything pagan. (Nehemiah 13:30)

The New Testament warns of a compromised faith and "Mystery Babylon the Great" (Revelation 17:5). Notice what the Bible teaches that God's people should do in regards to "Babylon the Great":

4 Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. (Revelation 18:4)

Christians should flee temptation and sin (1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22), not embrace it nor promote it. They should not combine pagan practices with the worship of the true God (1 Corinthians 10:19-21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18), even it is a tradition (Matthew 15:3-9).

Jesus taught:

23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:23-24)

The truth is that Christmas is not a biblical holy day, it was not part of the original faith, it has pagan trappings, and Jesus was not born on either of the two widely observed dates.

Strive to be a true worshiper of God—that does NOT include Christmas.

The FIRST Commandment



By Bob Thiel

Should human life be focused on the physical?

No, though most in the world live like life should be.

Oh yes, they have their religious rituals and traditions. And many pray.

But when it comes down to it, God is not what is really important to them.

Yet for Christians, that is not to be the case. Jesus said:

31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:31-33)

Do you put God first?

Decades ago, I remember someone telling me that God should not get in the way of my career. He claimed to be Christian of some type. He obviously did not believe in seeking first the Kingdom of God. But Christians should.

Here is the first commandment from the Book of Exodus:

2 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of

bondage. 3 “You shall have no other gods before Me. (Exodus 20:2-3)

Because of the reference to God bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, various ones have concluded that this command, as well as others, was only for the children of Israel.

However, that view overlooks the fact that versions of this command were in place before there were children of Israel as well as after Jesus was resurrected. It also overlooks the fact that the Bible also speaks of spiritual Egypt (Revelation 11:8).

Furthermore, consider whether or not you have ever really come out from the false ways and traditions of this world and have also truly repented of your own lusts and sins. We all must come out of spiritual Egypt.

Notice some of what God said to Abraham:

7 I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 15:7).

1 I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. (Genesis 17:1)

The Bible also says:

5 Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws. (Genesis 26:5)

The same Hebrew word translated as ‘commandments’ here, *mitsvot*, is also mentioned in Exodus 20:6 when the Ten Commandments were listed.

The passage in Genesis shows that not only did Abraham obey, he knew what God expected. And this was centuries before the Ten Commandments were given at Mount Sinai.

Christians, too, are admonished to be obedient (1 Peter 1:13-14).

What About Adam and Eve?

God is the One we are supposed to obey (Acts 5:32).

Do you realize that’s one of the definitions of God?

Whoever you obey most is your god. Whatever you serve could be your god. It might be your automobile. Maybe it's an idol. Maybe it's your boss or family. Whatever it is, that's your god if you obey it and disobey the God of the Bible (cf. Acts 5:29).

16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? (Romans 6:16)

Adam and Eve had another god in place of the true God. Adam and Eve violated the first commandment. Eve heeded the voice of the serpent (Genesis 3:13) and Adam heeded Eve (Genesis 3:17). Joel taught:

12 "Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." (Joel 2:12)

God has always wanted total commitment.

The Greatest Commandment

What is the greatest commandment? Jesus was asked about that:

35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. (Matthew 22:35-37)

Many people say that they love God, but God is not truly real to them. They put other priorities above obeying God.

Consider the following that Joshua stated:

14 "Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! 15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the

gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:14-15)

Do any Christians really believe that they should serve false gods?

Yet, even though Jesus referred to the first commandment as the greatest commandment, this is the commandment that is violated the most.

The Bible teaches:

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

However, most will not do that. Instead, most are wise in their own eyes and tend to trust themselves.

The Bible warns:

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. (Proverbs 3:7)

Those that are wise in their own eyes and not properly trusting God are violating the first commandment.

Christians are to pray that GOD's will be done (Matthew 6:10) and have Jesus' attitude of "not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

As was the case in Jesus' time, many accept 'traditions of men' which nullify their commitment to the commandments of God (cf. Matthew 15:3-9) and will not risk being put out of their compromised churches because "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43).

If people actually would keep the first commandment, there would be no more crime. No illegitimate births. No sexually transmitted diseases. No murders. No thefts. Politicians would tell the truth. The world would be a much better place.

The first commandment is that important, and actually more important than that. Its obedience would result in vast abundance and peace. Society would change and spiritual peace would reign. While Satan would still try to influence people in this age (Ephesians 2:2), people would follow the admonition of James:

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:7-8)

The world would be a so much better place if people would heed the first commandment.

Why Love God?

Why should you love God? Well:

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. 18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. (James 1:17-18)

Every good gift is from God. Furthermore, Jesus was “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29). God has a plan for us: to glorify us as He glorified Jesus (cf. John 17:22).

God plans to put the universe under subjection of His resurrected children (Hebrews 2:5-10)!

Additionally, consider:

9 We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. (Romans 5:8-9)

Despite the problems you may have, you have great promises:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

6 ... He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; (Philippians 1:6)

God made us. All good gifts come from God. Despite our sins, He sent Jesus to die for us (John 3:16). If we truly love God all things will work out for our good, and thus, God will be faithful until the day of Jesus and glorify us. We have a lot to love God for!

False Confidence

We are to look to the God of the Bible. Yet, many throughout history have turned to astrology, witchcraft, and spiritists instead (Isaiah 47:13-15). That is not something that God’s people should do:

19 And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. (Deuteronomy 4:19)

10 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. 13 You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. 14 For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you. (Deuteronomy 18:10-14)

Christians do not read horoscopes, etc. We look to the Bible (Isaiah 8:10; 66:5). Christians do “not follow cunningly devised fables” (2 Peter 1:16).

First Commandment Before Sinai, from Jesus, and After Jesus’ Death

The Bible shows the first commandment was in place

before Mt. Sinai:

“I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur” (Genesis 15:7); “I am Almighty God, walk before me and be blameless” (Gen 17:1); “I am the God of your father--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6). “Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves” (Genesis 35:2). “and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD” (Exodus 12:12). “Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them” (Exodus 18:11). “This also would be an iniquity deserving of judgement, for I would have denied God who is above” (Job 31:28). “Then Job answered the LORD and said, ‘I know that you can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from you’” (Job 42:1-2).

Jesus taught and expanded the first commandment:

“You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve” (Matthew 4:10). “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and the great commandment” (Matthew 22:37-38). “And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment” (Mark 12:30). “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve” (Luke 4:8).

After Jesus was resurrected, the New Testament taught the first commandment:

Paul said, “God, who made the world and everything in it...they should seek the Lord” (Acts 17:24,27). Paul also said, “I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law” (Acts 24:14). “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (2 Corinthians 6:16). “you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin

is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15); which is another way of saying, put nothing in the world before God. “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God” (Revelation 14:9-10). “Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image” (Revelation 20:4). “But the...unbelieving...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

The first commandment is not only the most important one, it is the one that is most commonly violated.

Jesus expanded the understanding of this commandment by stating that truly loving God is the greatest of the commandments.

It is wrong to rebel against God by violating the first commandment:

22 Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,

As in obeying the voice of the Lord?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,

And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. (1 Samuel 15:22-23)

God expects His people to obey Him.

We should love our Creator and heavenly Father. The first commandment is a reminder to do so.

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33)—put your trust in God (Proverbs 3:5-6) and strive to keep the first commandment.

STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE



LESSON 14B: WHAT ARE HUMANS?

Bob Thiel, Editor-in-Chief

Published 2018 by the Continuing Church of God

Preface: This course is highly based upon the personal correspondence course developed in 1954 that began under the direction of the late C. Paul Meredith in the old Radio Church of God. Various portions have been updated for the 21st century (though much of the original writing has been retained). It also has more scriptural references, as well as information and questions not in the original course. Unless otherwise noted, scriptural references are to the NKJV, copyright Thomas Nelson Publishing, used by permission. The KJV, sometimes referred to as the Authorized Version is also often used. Additionally, Catholic-approved translations such as the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) are sometimes used as are other translations.

God Reveals What Humans Really Are!

Jesus Christ is the Word of God, the Spokesman of God the Supreme Creator. Unless He had revealed His knowledge to us, we would have had no possible way to find out what human beings really are, what death is, and what lies beyond! And unless you accept His revelation of that knowledge, you have NO basis whatsoever for any knowledge or belief as to what you really are!

Only the Bible has the complete and INFALLIBLE record of Jesus Christ's testimony about life and death.

Here are Christ's own words: "I am He who lives, AND WAS DEAD" – Christ, then, has returned from the dead, come back to life to REVEAL what happened ON THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH—"and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen." He continues, "And I have the keys of Hades [the grave] and of Death" (Revelation 1:18).

Christ has the keys of the grave and of death. There is nothing that can be hidden from Him, or kept back from His almighty power! He has ALL knowledge; SCIENCE can only reveal PART of the truth that Christ knows. Yet science can contribute something. What do experiments lead scientists to believe?

SCIENCE DEALS ONLY WITH MATERIAL SUBSTANCE – matter, force, energy. Matter is either inorganic or organic – dead or living. Science knows of no life apart from matter, because science is limited entirely to the material world that can be weighed and measured – what can be perceived by the five senses. All that a human can know NATURALLY IS MATERIAL.

NO SCIENTIFIC AUTHORITY BELIEVES THAT LIFE IN PLANTS OR ANIMALS IS A SEPARATE ENTITY WHICH MAY EXIST APART FROM, OR OUTSIDE OF THAT PLANT OR ANIMAL.

An important contribution of science to the study of what a human is, is the LAW OF BIOGENESIS. This is the scientific demonstration that all living substance, or matter, arises only from other substance already living. We discussed this in Lesson 11 of this Course. Life can come only from life. When life ceases, the plant or animal or human becomes dead matter.

Nothing is more certainly proved by science than the utter impossibility of the reappearance of life whether of plant, animal or human – in a resurrection through any powers inherent within matter. That is one of the reasons why SCIENCE ASSUMES there COULD BE NO RESURRECTION. Science IS ABLE TO OBSERVE ONLY WHAT IS MATERIAL. All living material is mortal matter – matter with a TEMPORARY EXISTENCE. Flesh is matter, and a human is flesh!

What about the doctrine of the immortality of the soul? What has science to say about it? NOTHING! SCIENCE HAS NEVER FOUND ANY IMMORTAL SOUL WITHIN A HUMAN because there is no way

for SCIENCE to observe any such thing. There is no evidence in the entire realm of scientific investigation of any such thing as an immortal soul that leaves the body at death, and that departs with all the store of knowledge that has been accumulated in the lifetime of the individual. All that science has proved is that individuals who have died on an operating table, and who have been revived after a few minutes through heart massage after quickly opening the chest, have known nothing about the intervening time! THEY HAVE "GONE" NOWHERE! They merely reawaken on the operating table. If too many minutes have elapsed, the deterioration of the brain is so rapid that the person is thereafter deprived of some of his thinking faculties, and of his store of previous knowledge. But certainly there is no evidence of any thinking soul being able to exist apart from the body!

SCIENCE can reveal no more than this. HUMAN PHILOSOPHY cannot reveal even this much, because philosophy has no way to prove any of its speculations apart from the tools of science.

ONLY THE BIBLE – the Revelation of Jesus Christ – CAN REVEAL WHAT SCIENCE IS UNABLE TO KNOW! Here is what the Bible reveals about WHAT A HUMAN REALLY IS!

1. Of what is a human composed, according to Jesus Christ? John 3:6, first part. Is a human born of the flesh in this life? Then is he FLESH? Since a person is born of fleshly parents, a human is NOT composed of SPIRIT.

COMMENT: Jesus here plainly points out that if we are born of flesh, we CANNOT be composed of spirit. The natural human, then, is NOT composed of an IMMORTAL SPIRITUAL SOUL in a body of mortal flesh. A person is composed ENTIRELY of mortal flesh and when that flesh dies, the PERSON IS DEAD – COMPLETELY! Science proves that!

2. Was Jesus Christ born of the flesh? Romans 1:3. Then Christ was composed of flesh, wasn't He? Compare this with Colossians 1:22. Jesus certainly knew what flesh was – because He was composed of flesh!
3. Was Paul composed of flesh? Romans 7:18. Was Paul a soul CLOTHED in a body of flesh? – or did Paul speak of himself as his flesh? Then is it not

true the real Paul, the personality, was flesh and not an immortal spirit?

4. Is the mind of the natural person also fleshly minded? Colossians 2:18, last part.

How Man Was Created

God created the first man. God tells us how He did it so we could know what we are. The one who did the work of creation was Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:16). Here is how He says He created man:

1. Out of what did God form man? Genesis 2:7. Notice that it was the man – NOT MERELY THE BODY – that was formed! Does it say that MAN was formed out of dust or out of SPIRIT?
2. Was merely the BODY composed of dust – OR was THE MAN composed of dust? Genesis 3:19, last part. Whom does God address in this verse – the body, or the man? Then it is the man, not merely the body, who is composed of dust, isn't it?
3. What was to happen to humans? Genesis 3:19, last part. Who was to return to dust, the body or THE HUMAN? Does God say "your body" shall return to dust, or "YOU" – THE CONSCIOUS HUMAN – shall return to dust – which?
4. After God had formed the lifeless man and made every cell in his body, what did God do to make the man ALIVE? Genesis 2:7, middle part of verse. Did God breathe something into man's nostrils? What was it that He BREATHED INTO the man?

COMMENT: God breathed into the man "the breath of life" – the AIR or WIND that gave the man life! It does NOT say the man had an immortal soul because God breathed one into the man! It was breath – the same breath we breathe today – that imparted life to the first human. God blew air or wind into the man's lungs through the nostrils, and the man lived!

5. Is essentially the same breath of life passing through the nostrils of the animals and fowl and rodents? Genesis 7:21-22. Then the source of LIFE of humans, of animals and of birds is the SAME breath of LIFE, isn't it? Since there is no immortal soul imparting life to the animals and to the fowl

of the air, therefore, there is no immortal soul imparting life to humans, is there?

6. What happens if living flesh is deprived of the breath of life? Psalm 104:29, last part. Do they die? Do THEY – or only their bodies – return to the dust? Same verse.
7. What does Psalm 146:4 reveal about the life of humans? What is it that returns to the earth when the breath leaves? Is it only the body or is it the human? ALL of the person? What happens to one's thoughts when death overtakes a human? Same verse, last part. Does one's thoughts continue to exist in an immortal soul – or do the thoughts PERISH? Does PERISH mean to exist forever, or to CEASE to exist? (Look up the meaning in your dictionary.)

A Human Being IS a MORTAL Soul

1. When God had breathed – blown – air or breath into the man's nostrils, what did the man Adam become? Genesis 2:7, KJV, last part.

COMMENT: The original Hebrew word here translated in the KJV "soul" is "nephesh." Young's Concordance defines it as a "breathing creature." Strong's Concordance also defines it as a "breathing creature, i.e. animal." The NKJV translates as "being." In Genesis 1:21, 24; 2:19; 9:10, 12, 15, 16 and Leviticus 11:46 the same word "nephesh" IS translated "creature" when referring to animals. And so a human is a creature.

The "soul," nephesh in Hebrew, is a reference to the "life" or the "life essence"--that which makes us living beings. The same term is used of animals in the Bible--actually it is used for non-humans more than humans in the Old Testament (e.g. Genesis 1:20,21,24).

Notice the same word "nephesh" IS translated as "dead body" or "the dead" in Leviticus 19:28; 21:1; 22:4, KJV; Numbers 5:2, KJV; 6:11, KJV and 9:6, 7, 10, KJV. THE SOUL, THEN, IS ANIMAL LIFE, SUBJECT TO DECAY AND DEATH. IT IS NOT IMMORTAL.

The SOUL IS COMPOSED OF THE DUST of the ground – it is material, not spiritual. It is matter. When the man BREATHES, he is a LIVING soul. When man ceases to breathe, he becomes a non-living or dead soul. That's what your Bible reveals!

Can the soul die? Ezekiel 18:4 and 20. If the soul were immortal, it could not die, could it? Then the soul is plainly MORTAL, isn't it? Job 4:17.

COMMENT: Since the soul is mortal, then humans are MORTAL – subject to DEATH.

Was Adam subject to death? Genesis 2:17, last part. Was it the body only that would die, or was it the conscious man – Adam – "you" – that would die?

2. Does the same thing that happens to humans happen to animals? Ecclesiastes 3:19. What one thing befalls both humans and animals alike? Same verse. Why? – because they all have the same TEMPORARY source of life, the breath of air? Do humans and animals all breathe air from the same source? When it comes to physical life, a human has no pre-eminence above an animal, correct?
3. Do all go to the same place at death? Ecclesiastes 3:20. Does this include ALL – men and animals alike? When an animal dies, it is dead; SO DIES A HUMAN also. When humans die, they are completely dead, too.
4. What is it that all humans and animals return to? Same verse. Do they ALL return to dust? Does this verse say that only the body returns to dust? Was it only the body, or was it the ENTIRE CONSCIOUS MAN that was originally made of dust? Genesis 3:19. Since the human, and not merely the body, is composed of dust, then it is the human who dies and returns to dust, isn't it? Ecclesiastes 3:19-20. Is this passage a part of Scripture? How much of Scripture is given by inspiration? 2 Timothy 3:16. Then this passage in Ecclesiastes IS INSPIRED, isn't it?

COMMENT: Some contend that this passage in Ecclesiastes is merely what SOLOMON thought, and that it is not the truth. The Bible plainly proves this idea false.

5. Now what does Ecclesiastes 3:21 teach?

COMMENT: There is, thus, a real difference between humans and animals. Humans have the "spirit of man" in them, whereas animals, including the other

primates, do not. The reality that there is a spirit in humans is taught in both the Old and New Testaments: 8 But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding. (Job 32:8)

11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? (1 Corinthians 2:11)

God gave animals instinct, but not the type of understanding that He gave humans (cf. Job 39:13-17). This “spirit in man” is not conscience after death (cf. Ecclesiastes 9:5; Psalm 6:5).

6. In many ways, are humans like the beasts that PERISH? Psalm 49:12.

What Is the LIFE of a Human?

A HUMAN IS A LIVING BREATHING mortal creature – a NEPHESH, or living soul/being, in whose nostrils is air. Let us understand the function of the breath of air that goes into your lungs. The blood flows through the wall of the lungs on the way back to the heart, as it is pumped through the veins and arteries of the body. The breath of air, upon contact with the surface of the lungs, gives up oxygen. This oxygen is absorbed into the bloodstream, and is quickly burned up in creating the energy needed to keep up body heat and other functions of the internal organs and muscles. The LIFE OF A HUMAN IS IN THE BLOOD, and the blood needs the breath of life to keep the body active and alive.

1. WHERE DOES THE LIFE OF ALL LIVING CREATURES RESIDE? Genesis 9:4. Is the life of man and animals found in the BLOODSTREAM? – or in an immortal soul?
2. Do we find the same definition of life in Leviticus 17:11 and 14?
3. Does Deuteronomy 12:23 corroborate this?

COMMENT: In these verses, the Hebrew word NEPHESH is translated “life.” The word NEPHESH or soul, then, can mean either the FLESHLY PART of a person or the LIFEBLOOD of a person.

4. Did Christ make His soul an offering for sin? Isaiah

53:10. How did He accomplish this? Verse 12.

COMMENT: Christ gave Himself for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3) – offered up His soul or body to be crucified, and allowed His lifeblood or soul to be poured out!

5. When a person dies – becomes lifeless – what happens to him? Ecclesiastes 9:5. How much do the dead know?

COMMENT: Since the dead are not conscious of anything, then a human is NOT born with an immortal soul which would be aware of things happening around it after man’s fleshly body dies.

6. Are those who have died able to praise God? Psalm 115:17. Does this sound like what most of you have been taught in the churches? Do the churches really believe and teach the Bible?
7. Is there any remembrance of God in death? Psalm 6:5.

COMMENT: DEATH is the OPPOSITE OF LIFE. Death is the CESSATION OF LIFE.

Is a Human Merely an Animal?

1. Since both humans and animals maintain their mortal existence by the very same breath – is a human MERELY AN ANIMAL? Isn’t man created in the image of God? Genesis 1:26-27. Are humans to rule over all other creatures? Verse 26.
2. Were animals created in God’s image or weren’t they created each after its own kind? Genesis 1:21, 24, 25.
3. Other than the “spirit in man,” what is it that makes humans different from the animals – the lower creatures of the earth that God created? Was a human to be made in the image and likeness of God? Did God, then, create a mortal being – a human – after His own kind – the God kind? Genesis 1:26-27.

COMMENT: The Hebrew words of Genesis 1:26-27 reveal God’s great plan and ultimate purpose for humankind! When God moulded Adam of the dust,

Adam was shaped in the “likeness” – the outward form and shape – of God Himself! God didn’t form any of the other creatures He had created to be a clay replica of Himself.

Notice what else God gave humans at creation! “God said, Let Us make man in OUR IMAGE ...” The Hebrew words here indicate more than merely the outward form and shape of God – His likeness – FAR MORE! The image of God refers to aspects of His MIND AND CHARACTER! No animal was ever given the gift of mind power! It is this very special attribute of mind and character that separates humans from animals!

A human IS NOT A MERE ANIMAL! Animals have only the brain – fantastically intricate brain with a degree of memory and instinct – which God created for each kind of animal. BUT ANIMALS DO NOT HAVE THE POTENTIAL OF MIND AND CHARACTER GOD CREATED ONLY FOR HUMANS.

Notice the great difference. Animals have brains as well as humans. Yet animals DO NOT HAVE TRUE REASONING, THINKING MINDS!

Animals follow habit patterns in their feeding, nesting, migration, and reproduction – by INSTINCT. This instinct which God created in their brains is set like a clock to cause them to react INVOLUNTARILY.

For example, thousands of birds flock south as winter approaches in the northern hemisphere each year without KNOWING WHY, without planning ahead an itinerary of stops. Yet at a given signal – like the alarm of a clock – they leave their summer feeding grounds in the North and travel thousands of miles south. Scientists don’t fully understand WHY – they can merely observe the operation of this animal instinct which God created. Each species of bird – each kind God created – has different instinctive patterns, builds different nests, feeds on different foods, and migrates in different ways at different times to different places. None of these actions are planned by animals however; they are merely the reaction Almighty God built into the instinct of each creature at creation.

But a HUMAN is DIFFERENT! A human is able to see – to perceive and understand – various ways to do any one thing. Humans can reason from memorized facts and knowledge, draw conclusions, make decisions,

will to act according to a thought-out plan. Animals have much, much, less reasoning abilities.

Each person may build a different house, eat different foods – live an entirely different way of life from every other. If a human wants to change a particular way of life, this can be done! Human beings are not subject to the type of instinct, governed by a set of pre-determined natural principles, as are animals.

Humans can CHOOSE – HUMANS HAVE FREE MORAL AGENCY! Humans can devise codes of morals and exercise self-discipline. Humans can originate ideas and evaluate scientific knowledge because humans have MINDS which were made in the “image” of God’s own mind! Humans can devise, plan, and bring those plans to fruition – because humans have some of the same creative powers God Himself has! BUT PEOPLE’S POWERS ARE LIMITED NOW (cf. Hebrews 2:8)!

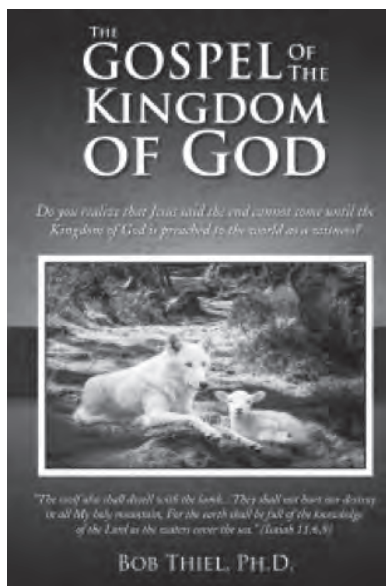
The attributes of mind and character make humans God’s unique physical creation. God has shared some of His own qualities – the image of His mind – with humans – and expects humans to love and to develop the IMAGE of GOD’S PERFECT HOLY CHARACTER.

That is the wonderful purpose God is working out here below! God gave humans the ability to choose right from wrong – and commands people to choose RIGHT! By constantly choosing God’s ways – making the right decisions God Himself would make, a human can develop the very character image of Almighty God!

This is what a human was designed to become at creation. This is the wonderful reason why humans were made different from animals, and given – IN A LIMITED WAY – some of the very attributes of God! God’s plan is to make of humans – now only a CLAY model of the God kind – partakers of God’s Own Divine Nature! God is reproducing himself IN HUMANKIND – and converted humans will someday be elevated to the God KIND!

To understand more of God’s wonderful purpose for humankind, you should read “What is the Meaning of Life?” available at COGwriter.com. The purpose for human life is the heart and core of Christ’s Gospel. No wonder those who couldn’t understand His message accused Him of BLASPHEMY!

What GOSPEL did JESUS Preach?



By Bob Thiel

While many act like the gospel is just the good news about the person of Jesus, the reality is that Jesus' followers taught the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

The Bible teaches that a utopian society, called the Kingdom of God, will replace human governments (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 11:15; 19:1-21).

When Jesus began His public ministry, He began by preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Here is what Mark reported:

14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).

The term gospel comes from the Greek word transliterated as euangelion, and means "good message" or "good news." In the New Testament the English word "kingdom," related to God's kingdom, is mentioned approximately 149 times in the NKJV and 151 in the Douay Rheims Bible. It comes from the Greek word transliterated as basileia which signifies

the rule or realm of royalty.

Human kingdoms, as well as God's kingdom, have a king (Revelation 17:14), they cover a geographic area (Revelation 11:15), they have rules (Isaiah 2:3-4; 30:9), and they have subjects (Luke 13:29).

Here is the first public teaching from Jesus that Matthew records:

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23).

Matthew also records:

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 9:35).

The New Testament shows that Jesus will reign forever:

33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:33).

Luke records that the purpose that Jesus was sent was to preach the Kingdom of God. Notice what Jesus taught:

43 He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Luke 4:43).

Have you ever heard that preached? Did you ever realize that Jesus' purpose for being sent was to preach the Kingdom of God?

Luke also records that Jesus did go and preach the Kingdom of God:

10 And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. 11 But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God (Luke 9:10-11).

Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God should be the top priority for those who would follow Him:

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

31 But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. 32 Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:31-32).

Christians are to SEEK FIRST the Kingdom of God. They do this by making this their top priority by living as Christ would have them live and looking forward to His return and kingdom. Yet, most who profess Christ, not only do not seek first the Kingdom of God, they do not even know what it is. Many also falsely believe that being involved in worldly politics is what God expects from Christians. By not understanding God's kingdom, they do not live now as they should or understand why humanity is so flawed.

Notice also that the kingdom will be given to a little flock (see also Romans 11:5). It takes humility to be willing to be part of the true little flock.

The Kingdom of God has not yet been established on the Earth

Jesus taught that His followers should pray for the kingdom to come, hence they do not already possess it:

9 Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done (Matthew 6:9-10).

Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the Kingdom of God:

1 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. 2 He sent them to preach the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-2).

Jesus taught that His presence alone was not the kingdom, as the kingdom was not established on the Earth then, as that is why He did what He did, and did not cast out demons in His name then:

28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God,

surely the kingdom of God has come upon you (Matthew 12:28).

The true kingdom is in the future—nor is it here now as Mark shows:

47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast ... (Mark 9:47).

23 Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:23-25). 25 Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25).

43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage ... (Mark 15:43).

Jesus taught that the kingdom is not now part of this present world:

36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36).

Jesus taught that the kingdom will come after He returns as its King:

31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the

left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:31-34).

Since the Kingdom of God is not here, we will not see a real utopia until after it has been established.

Because most do not understand God's kingdom, they fail to understand how His loving government works. The Kingdom of God will not come "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Roman 11:25)—and that has not happened yet.

What did Jesus say the kingdom was like?

Jesus provided some explanations of what the Kingdom of God is like:

26 And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, 27 and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. 28 For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come" (Mark 4:26-29).
18 Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? 19 It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."
20 And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? 21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened" (Luke 13:18-21).

These parables suggest that, at first, the Kingdom of God is quite small, but will become large.

Luke also recorded:

29 They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:29).

Thus, the Kingdom of God will have people from all over the world. It will NOT be limited to those who have Israelite ancestry. People will sit down in this kingdom.

Luke 17 and the Kingdom

Luke 17:20-21 perplexes some. But before getting to that, notice that people will actually eat in the Kingdom of God:

15 "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (Luke 14:15).

Since people will (in the future) eat in the Kingdom of God, it is not just something set aside in their hearts now, in spite of mistranslations/ misunderstandings of Luke 17:21 which suggest otherwise.

The Moffatt translation of Luke 17:20-21 should help some understand:

20 On being asked by the Pharisees when the Reign of God was coming, he answered them, "The Reign of God is not coming as you hope to catch sight of it; 21 no one will say, 'Here it is' or 'There it is,' for the Reign of God is now in your midst." (Luke 17:20-21, Moffatt; see also NASB and ESV translations)

Notice that Jesus was speaking to the unconverted, carnal, and hypocritical Pharisees. Jesus "answered them," — it was the Pharisees who asked Jesus the question. They refused to recognize Him.

Were they in the CHURCH? No!

Jesus was also not talking about a church soon to be organized. Nor was He talking about sentiments in the mind or heart.

Jesus was talking about His REIGN! The Pharisees were not asking Him about a church. They knew nothing of any New Testament church soon to be started. They were not asking about a type of pretty sentiment.

If one thinks the Kingdom of God is the CHURCH — and the Kingdom of God was "within" the Pharisees

— then obviously, it was not!

Such a conclusion is rather ridiculous isn't it? While some Protestant translations translate part of Luke 17:21 as "the Kingdom of God is "within you" (NKJV/KJV), even the Catholic New Jerusalem Bible correctly translates that as "the kingdom of God is among you." Jesus was the one among, in the midst, of the Pharisees.

Now, the Pharisees thought they looked forward to the Kingdom of God. But they misunderstood it. Jesus explained that it would not be a local, or limited Kingdom for the Jews only, as they seemed to think (nor a church as some now believe). God's Kingdom would not be merely one of many human and visible kingdoms which people could point out or see, and say, "This is it, here"; or "that's the Kingdom, over there."

Jesus, Himself, was born to be the KING of that Kingdom, as He plainly told Pilate (John 18:36-37).

Understand that the Bible uses the terms "king" and "kingdom" interchangeably (e.g. Daniel 7:17-18,23). The KING of the future Kingdom of God was, then and there, standing next to the Pharisees. But they would not recognize Him as their king (John 19:21). When He returns, the world will reject Him (Revelation 19:19).

Jesus went on, in the following verses in Luke 17, to describe His second coming, when the Kingdom of God shall rule ALL THE EARTH (continuing with the Moffatt for consistency for this chapter):

22 To his disciples he said, "There will come days when you will long and long in vain to have even one day of the Son of man. 23 Men will say, 'See, here he is!' 'See, there he is!' but do not go out or run after them, 24 for like lightning that flashes from one side of the sky to the other, so will the Son of man be on his own day. 25 But he must first endure great suffering and be rejected by the present generation. (Luke 17:22-25, Moffatt)

Jesus referred to lightning flashing, just as in Matthew 24:27-31, describing His second coming to RULE the whole world. Jesus is not saying that His people will

not be able to see Him when He returns.

People will not recognize Him as their KING (Revelation 11:15) and will fight against Him (Revelation 19:19)! Many will think Jesus represents the Antichrist. Jesus was not saying that the Kingdom of God was within those Pharisees—He told them elsewhere that they were not going to be in the Kingdom because of their hypocrisy (Matthew 23:13-14). Nor was Jesus saying that the Church would be the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God is something humans shall one day be able to ENTER — like at the resurrection of the just! Yet, even Abraham and the other patriarchs are not there yet (cf. Hebrews 11:13-40).

The disciples knew that the Kingdom of God was not within them personally then, and that it had to appear as the following, which came after Luke 17:21, shows:

11 Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately (Luke 19:11).

The Kingdom was clearly in the future

How can you tell if the Kingdom is near? As part of addressing that question, Jesus listed prophetic events (Luke 21:8-28) and then taught:

29 Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30 When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 So you also, **when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near** (Luke 21:29-31).

Jesus wanted His people to follow prophetic events to know when the Kingdom would come. Jesus elsewhere told His people to watch and pay attention to prophetic events (Luke 21:36; Mark 13:33-37). Despite Jesus' words, many discount watching prophetically-linked world events.

In Luke 22 & 23, Jesus again showed that the Kingdom of God was something that would be fulfilled in the future when He taught:

15 "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this

Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” 17 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22:15-18).

39 But one of those evildoers who were crucified with him was blaspheming him and he said, “If you are The Messiah, save yourself and save us also.” 40 And his companion rebuked him and he said to him, “Are you not even afraid of God? For you also are in condemnation with him. 41 And we justly so, because we are worthy, for we are repaid according to what we have done, but nothing evil has been done by this one.” 42 And he said to Yeshua, “My Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.” 43 But Yeshua said to him, “Amen, I say to you that today you shall be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:39-43, Aramaic in Plain English)

The Kingdom of God did not come as soon as Jesus was killed either as both Mark and Luke show us:

43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage ... (Mark 15:43).

51 He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God (Luke 23:51).

It is after the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50-55) that Christians will be born again to enter the Kingdom of God, as John records:

3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5).

Only God’s people will see the ultimate post-millennial

Kingdom of God.

Now please further understand that after Jesus was resurrected, He again taught about the Kingdom of God:

3 He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

The first and last sermons that Jesus gave were about the Kingdom of God! Jesus came as the messenger to teach about that Kingdom.

Jesus also had the Apostle John write about the millennial Kingdom of God that would be on the earth.

Notice what He had John write:

4 I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

Early Christians taught that the millennial Kingdom of God would be on the earth and replace the governments of the world as the Bible teaches (cf. Revelation 5:10, 11:15).

Why, if the Kingdom of God is so important, haven’t most heard very much about it?

Partially because Jesus called it a mystery:

11 And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables (Mark 4:11).

Even today the true Kingdom of God is a mystery to most.

Consider, also, that Jesus said that the end (of the age) will come (soon) AFTER the gospel of the kingdom is preached in all the world as a WITNESS:

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world

as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14).

Proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God is important and is to be accomplished in these end times. It is a “good message” as it offers the real hope to humanity’s ills, despite what political leaders may teach.

If you consider Jesus’ words, it should be clear the true Christian church should be proclaiming that gospel of the kingdom now. This should be its top priority for the Church. And in order to do this properly, multiple languages should be utilized.

This is what the Continuing Church of God strives to do. And that is why this booklet has been translated into scores of languages.

Jesus taught most would NOT accept His way:

13 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because

narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

The gospel of the Kingdom of God leads to life!

It may be of interest to note that although most professing Christians seem oblivious to the notion that Christ’s emphasis was on preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, secular theologians and historians have often understood that this is what the Bible actually teaches.

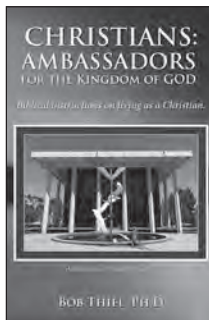
Yet, Jesus Himself, expected His disciples to teach the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:2,60).

Because the future kingdom will be based on God’s laws, it will bring peace and prosperity—and obeying those laws in this age leads to true peace (Psalm 119:165; Ephesians 2:15).

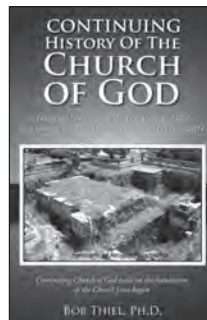
And this good news of the kingdom was known in the Old Testament scriptures.

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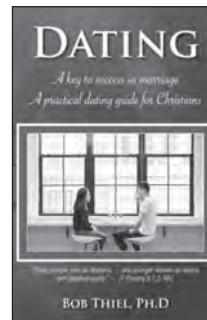
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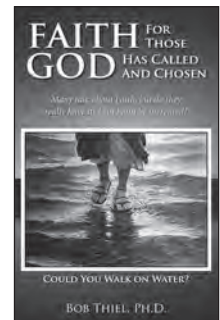
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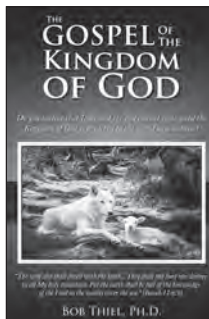
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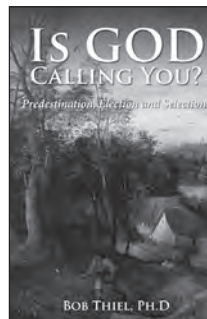
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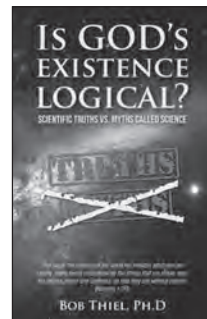
Faith for Those God has Called and Chosen



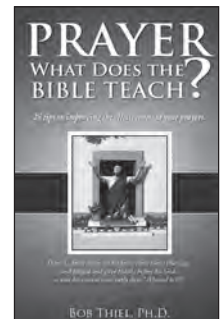
The Gospel of the Kingdom of God



Is God Calling You?



Is God's Existence Logical?



Prayer: What Does the Bible Teach?

The GREAT TRIBULATION and FINAL TIME of the GENTILES

By Bob Thiel

We are getting closer to the time that the Great Tribulation will start. When it starts it will not be a good time for the USA (Daniel 11:39) nor its Anglo-Allies (Jeremiah 30:7).

It will also be hard on many in the Middle East and North Africa (Daniel 11:40-43) as well as others.

Many are now too complacent and do not really think the Great Tribulation will happen. But that will be a mistake:

9 Rise up, you women who are at ease, Hear my voice; You complacent daughters, Give ear to my speech. 10 In a year and some days You will be troubled, you complacent women; For the vintage will fail, The gathering will not come. 11 Tremble, you women who are at ease; Be troubled, you complacent ones; Strip yourselves, make yourselves bare, And gird sackcloth on your waists. 12 People shall mourn upon their breasts For the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. 13 On the land of my people will come up thorns and briers, Yes, on all the happy homes in the joyous city; 14 Because the palaces will be forsaken, The bustling city will be deserted. The forts and towers will become lairs forever, A joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks — (Isaiah 32:9-14)

14 The sinners in Zion are afraid;
Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites:
“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?
Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? (Isaiah 33:14)

The “sinners in Zion” looks like a reference to Laodicean Christians (Revelation 3:14-19) and/or descendants of Israel.

The Bible shows that it is against “an hypocritical



nation” that God will send the European King of Assyria to punish (Isaiah 10:6, KJV). Note: The same root Hebrew word is in both Isaiah 10:6 and 33:14 for ‘hypocrite..’

Nations like the USA and UK are hypocritical.

Notice what happens during the “great tribulation” according to Jesus:

21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened. 23 Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not

believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand. 26 Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together (Matthew 24:21-28).

This tribulation starts with the fifth seal of Revelation:

9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. (Revelation 6:9-11)

Notice that the fifth seal is open and is related to persecutions. There are persecutions prophesied just before the Great Tribulation starts per Daniel 7:25a, 11:28-35; Revelation 12:13, and then during the time of the Great Tribulation per Daniel 7:25b, Revelation 12:17; 14:12-13.

Notice the following from Jeremiah:

5 Her adversaries have become the master, Her enemies prosper; For the Lord has afflicted her Because of the multitude of her transgressions. Her children have gone into captivity before the enemy. (Lamentations 1:5)

17 Zion spreads out her hands, But no one comforts her; The Lord has commanded concerning Jacob That those around him become his adversaries; (Lamentations 1:17)

2 The Lord has swallowed up and has not pitied All the dwelling places of Jacob. He has thrown down in His wrath The strongholds of the daughter of Judah; He has brought them down

to the ground; He has profaned the kingdom and its princes. 3 He has cut off in fierce anger Every horn of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand From before the enemy.

He has blazed against Jacob like a flaming fire Devouring all around. 4 Standing like an enemy, He has bent His bow; With His right hand, like an adversary, He has slain all who were pleasing to His eye; On the tent of the daughter of Zion, He has poured out His fury like fire. (Lamentations 2:2-4)

11 My eyes fail with tears, My heart is troubled; My bile is poured on the ground Because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, Because the children and the infants faint in the streets of the city. 12 They say to their mothers, "Where is grain and wine?" As they swoon like the wounded In the streets of the city, As their life is poured out

In their mothers' bosom. (Lamentations 2:11-12)

19 "Arise, cry out in the night, At the beginning of the watches; Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young children, Who faint from hunger at the head of every street." (Lamentations 2:19)

21 "Young and old lie On the ground in the streets; My virgins and my young men Have fallen by the sword; You have slain them in the day of Your anger, You have slaughtered and not pitied. (Lamentations 2:21)

8 Now their appearance is blacker than soot; They go unrecognized in the streets; Their skin clings to their bones, It has become as dry as wood. 9 Those slain by the sword are better off Than those who die of hunger; For these pine away, Stricken for lack of the fruits of the field. 10 The hands of the compassionate women Have cooked their own children; They became food for them In the destruction of the daughter of my people. 11 The Lord has fulfilled His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion, And it has devoured its foundations. (Lamentations 4:8-11)

15 The joy of our heart has ceased; Our dance has turned into mourning. 16 The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned! 17 Because of this our heart is faint; Because of these things our eyes grow dim; (Lamentations 5:15-17)

Since Jesus said this will be the greatest tribulation of all time, it will be at least as bad as what Jeremiah was inspired to write.

Although many in the Church of God have experienced economic and social persecution in their walk with Christ, future severe persecution, beginning first with the Philadelphia remnant of Christians, is expected (Daniel 7:25a, 11:28-35), it is then followed by persecution on all Christians once the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21) begins.

Is all hopeless?

No!

Jeremiah also wrote:

25 The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him. 26 It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the Lord. (Lamentations 3:25-26)

Although your nation probably will not repent (Anglo or otherwise), you can.

Some, but not most, Christians will be protected (Revelation 12:14-17; Revelation Chapter 3)—only Philadelphia Christians are promised such protection (Revelation 3:7-13).

While many like to focus on the idea that the Philadelphians will flee to a place of protection, it needs to be understood that there will apparently be a time of severe persecution just prior to the fleeing and the start of the Great Tribulation that Philadelphia Christians will have to endure.

This will be also be a time of demonic signs and lying wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 16:12-16; 13:13-15; 18:23; 19:20).

Notice some other biblical accounts of events that will happen to the end time descendants of Israel:

47 “Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, 48 therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you. 49 The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, 50 a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young. 51 And they shall eat the increase of your livestock and the produce of your land, until you are destroyed; they shall not leave you grain or new wine or oil, or the increase of your cattle or the offspring of your flocks, until they have destroyed you. (Deuteronomy 28:47-51)

16 Moreover He said to me, “Son of man, surely I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall drink water by measure and with dread, 17 that they may lack bread and water, and be dismayed with one another, and waste away because of their iniquity. (Ezekiel 4:16-17)

1 “And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber’s razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take scales to weigh and divide the hair. 2 You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. 3 You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment. 4 Then take some of them again and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel.

5 “Thus says the Lord God: ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her. 6 She has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against My statutes more than the countries that are all around her; for they have refused My judgments, and they have not walked in My statutes.’ 7 Therefore

thus says the Lord God: 'Because you have multiplied disobedience more than the nations that are all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept My judgments, nor even done according to the judgments of the nations that are all around you' — 8 therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. **9 And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations.** 10 Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds.

11 'Therefore, as I live,' says the Lord God, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. 12 One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. (Ezekiel 5:1-12)

The **bolded** portion is consistent with Jesus' comments in Matthew 24:21 and Mark 13:19, hence much of the above has to do with the Great Tribulation.

Yet, despite what some think, the Great Tribulation will initially mainly be directed to those who are descended from Jacob/Israel:

6 Ask now, and see, Whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins Like a woman in labor, And all faces turned pale?

7 Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it. (Jeremiah 30:6-7)

25 ... Gentiles, who do not know You...they have eaten up Jacob, Devoured him and consumed him, And made his dwelling place desolate. (Jeremiah 10:25)

So, we see that Gentiles will consume Jacob/Israel. The descendants of which have been the dominant peoples in the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Massive Destruction?

Some would call the start of the Great Tribulation World War III.

Some wonder why the USA, to name one nation, would be destroyed. Well, for one example because of politics, the USA has promoted the LGBTQ agenda around the world (though less so recently under the Trump Administration). For another, because of short-sighted economic problems, the USA has become the most indebted nation of all time. Also, because of sin, greed, and ignorance, America has been into abortion as well as producing genetically-modified foods. These "foods" are genetically identical which makes them susceptible to total elimination via famine-causing pestilential organisms. I have long suspected that the time will come when some type of pestilence will hit America's genetically-modified grain crops like corn and wreak havoc on the land. Enough so, that this may embolden its enemies to attack Britain and/or the USA to begin the Great Tribulation.

Nations will betray the USA, who has been "great among the nations":

1 How lonely sits the city That was full of people! How like a widow is she, Who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces Has become a slave! 2 She weeps bitterly in the night, Her tears are on her cheeks; Among all her lovers She has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; They have become her enemies. (Lamentations 1:1-2)

4 We pay for the water we drink, And our wood comes at a price. 5 They pursue at our heels; We labor and have no rest. 6 We have given our hand to the Egyptians And the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread. 7 Our fathers sinned and are no more, But we bear their iniquities. 8 Servants rule over us; There is none to deliver us from their hand". (Lamentations 5:4-8)

Notice that “friends” will betray and that Assyria, which is who God will use to punish the certain descendants of Israel, such as the U.S.A., etc. (the multi-ethnic USA is referred to as ‘Samaria’ in Isaiah 10:5-12;) is involved. Modern Assyrians are considered to be friends/allies of the USA, Canada, UK, etc.

Destruction will come to the highly indebted suddenly (the USA is the most indebted nation of all time—and its debt is expected to continue to increase):

8 ... A plunderer at noonday; I will cause anguish and terror to fall on them suddenly. (Jeremiah 15:8)

6 “Will not all these take up a proverb against him, And a taunting riddle against him, and say, ‘Woe to him who increases What is not his — how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges?’ 7 Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty. 8 Because you have plundered many nations, All the remnant of the people shall plunder you (Habakkuk 2:6-8)

The late Pastor General of the old Worldwide Church of God, Herbert W. Armstrong, wrote the following in 1979:

What is this abomination? This refers to Daniel 11:31 and Matthew 24:15 ... That will be a time when the UNITED Europe shall appear--the revival of the medieval “Holy Roman Empire.” We shall then be warned, and readied to be taken to a place of refuge and safety from the Great Tribulation. **Forty-five days later “the beasts armies” will surround Jerusalem. Thirty days later the Great Tribulation will probably start with a nuclear attack on London and Britain--and possibly the same day or immediately after, on the United States and Canadian cities.** The GREAT TRIBULATION, we shall fully then realize, is the time of “Jacob’s Trouble,” spoken of in Jeremiah 30:7. And Jacob’s name was named on Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48:16). At that time a third of the people in our nations will die, or shall have died, by famine and disease epidemics; another third will die of the war--our cities being destroyed (Ezek. 6:6), and the remaining third will be carried to the land of our enemies as slaves (Ezek. 5:12). (Armstrong HW. The

Time We Are In, Now. Pastor General’s Report-Vol 1, No. 15, November 20, 1979, Page 2).

The Bible states:

33 I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste (Leviticus 26:33).

Nuclear and other high-tech weapons (as well as emp (electromagnetic pulse), bombs), as well as devastating solar flares, are ways to make land desolate and modern cities waste.

Events that resemble nuclear or similar devastation are part of the prophesied curses mentioned in the Bible:

23 ‘The whole land is brimstone, salt, and burning (Deuteronomy 29:23).

19 Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts The land is burned up, And the people shall be as fuel for the fire; No man shall spare his brother. 20 And he shall snatch on the right hand And be hungry; He shall devour on the left hand And not be satisfied; Every man shall eat the flesh of his own arm. 21 Manasseh shall devour Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh; Together they shall be against Judah (Isaiah 9:19-21).

6 In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste (Ezekiel 6:6).

It remains likely that many of the Protestants that survive the tribulation (whether or not they believed in a pre-tribulation view of Christ’s return) will be part of the great multitude of those converted during the tribulation (c.f. Revelation 7:9) through the Continuing Church of God message which will mainly then be brought to the world by the “two witnesses” (a lot of Greco-Roman Catholics and those of non-biblically-claimed faiths will be as well; cf. Revelation 7:9-10).

How do we know that the Anglo-nations in general, and the USA in particular, and not just the land of Judea are the initial target of the great tribulation? One reason is Daniel 11:39:

39 Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall

acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain. (Daniel 11:39)

The “he” is the final King of the North, the Beast of Revelation 13. In the 21st century, the “strongest fortresses” in the world belong to the USA, and to a lesser degree, its Anglo-Saxon descended allies. The strongest fortresses, by the way, cannot be referring to China or Russia as they do not get involved until verse 44 of Daniel 11. Nor the Arab lands, which do not get invaded until verses 40-43. The current nation of Israel, of course, does not have the strongest fortresses. Plus, dividing the Anglo-lands would bring much more gain, than the land of Judea. Thus, this is pointing to the Anglo-nations, which currently harbor many in the faithful church.

Final Time of the Gentiles

The final time of the Gentiles coincides with the time of the Great Tribulation and the time of Jacob’s troubles.

For the final time of the Gentiles to arise, the Gentiles will need to cooperate together against the USA and its Anglo-Saxon descended allies. The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union), SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), EU (European Union), and Silk Road (a Chinese plan to connect Asia via roads and waterways) arrangements are all intended to do that and are all taking steps which align with properly understood biblical prophecy. A block of nations from North Africa and the Middle East, which US President Donald Trump and others have encouraged, will also be involved (cf. Daniel 11:27, 40-43).

Yet, most in the USA, Canada, UK, Australia, and New Zealand do not understand what is now happening on the world scene and how they will be affected.

Let’s look at the following prophecies from the Old and New Testaments related to the Gentiles:

23 ‘Make a chain, For the land is filled with crimes of blood, And the city is full of violence.
24 Therefore **I will bring the worst of the Gentiles, And they will possess their houses;** I

will cause the pomp of the strong to cease, And their holy places shall be defiled. 25 Destruction comes; They will seek peace, but there shall be none. (Ezekiel 7:23-25)

23 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24 And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:23-24)

2 But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. (Revelation 11:2)

Notice that Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jesus (whose words are recorded in Luke), and John (who penned Revelation) were talking about the same time. Also notice that “it is the time of Jacob’s trouble” and that the “Gentiles” are dominating. This means those that are descended from Israel or have the name of Jacob (cf. Genesis 48:14-16) will be mainly be trampled. One of the peoples that God says He will use to punish the descendants of Israel, Assyria (Isaiah 10:5-11), are a Gentile people—they will normally lead during the time of the Gentiles. This will be a terrible time.

Here is some of what the old Radio Church of God taught about it:

In Jesus’ prophecy in Matthew 24, He was answering the question about the TIME of the end of the world, and the second coming of Christ to rule the world.

WHOSE Tribulation?

Next, WHOSE trouble will this be? WHO will plunge the world into it? We have the what and the when. Now notice the who! The prophet Jeremiah speaks of this SAME time of greatest trouble. “For lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Eternal : and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to

their fathers, and they shall possess it” (Jer, 30: 3)...

Continue Jeremiah’s prophecy: “For thus saith the Eternal: we have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. A TIME OF WAR! “Alas! for that day is GREAT, so that none is like it. Notice-the same GREATEST time of trouble-so great that NONE IS LIKE IT! Now , upon WHOM? “ .. it is even the time of JACOB’S TROUBLE but he shall be delivered out of it (Jer. 30: 5,7). It is a world trouble UPON JACOB! ...

Now WHO is Jacob? ...

Who is Jacob today? ...

One of the original twelve tribes, Joseph, was given “a double portion,” and became two tribes -Ephraim and Manasseh-so named from the two sons of Joseph. And they were the Birthright tribes...

And it was these two tribes who were to bear the NAME Israel: “Let my name be named on them’ said the aged Israel (Gen. 48:16), in passing on the Birth right promises JUST before his death. And so, in prophecy, the NAME Jacob or the name Israel, often refers to the two great nations descended from Ephraim and Manasseh. These are Great Britain and the United States. The prophesied YOKE of invasion, defeat in war, and slavery, then, is to fall on Britain and the United States! (Armstrong HW. BRITAIN’S DOOM Prophesied for Common Market Seeking Membership! Plain Truth, July 1962)

Common Teachings in Error

It is the common assumption that the times of the Gentiles are a period of blessing on the nations. It is argued that since God took away the blessing of being great and dominant nations from Israel and Judah and since the Gentiles for centuries have been dominant nations, that human rule is a blessing bestowed upon the Gentiles.

Nothing could be further from the truth! ...

Times of Israel’s Punishment a Key to Understanding

Israel was promised great national blessings, including national greatness if they would obey God. But God also promised that if they obstinately refused to obey Him, if they refused to follow His laws and let Him rule their lives, then He would punish them for a period called seven times (Lev. 26).

The Bible itself defines this period of seven times for us. If you turn to Revelation the twelfth chapter, and compare verses 6 and 14 you will see that the word time in prophecy simply means a year, hence seven times would be seven years or 2520 days.

Now let’s notice another key. In Numbers 14:34, God said Israel would bear their iniquities in the wilderness after the number of days they searched the land of Canaan, forty days, each day for a year.

Then seven times or 2520 prophetic days would equal 2520 literal years! This period of seven times or 2520 years punishment did come upon Israel because they went their own ways and would not submit to the rule of God. Israel went into captivity about 721 B.C. and did not become a great people again until their times of punishment ceased about 1800 A.D. At that time the descendants of the ancient House of Israel -America and Britain and the democratic peoples of the world--began to rise to such wealth and power as the world has never enjoyed before all because of the promises made to Abraham.

Also Palestine, after a punishment against the House of Judah, that began about 604 B.C., was brought back from the Gentile Turks in 1917-exactly 2520 years later, when it came under the control of Great Britain, and finally the Jews. The seven times of Israel’s punishment was a period of great privation and suffering, of slavery and war because they would not submit their wills and their ways to God, because they would not allow Him to rule their lives by His

perfect laws, which could have brought them peace and prosperity and dominion.

The Original Prophecy Found in Daniel

Now that we understand the seven times punishment on Israel, let's understand the meaning of the times of the Gentiles.

The original prophecy to which Jesus had reference is found in the fourth chapter of Daniel. Jesus understood that this prophetic vision of the great tree had reference to the times of the Gentiles as well as to Nebuchadnezzar's literal punishment.

Notice Daniel 4: 17. This striking vision was not only to teach Nebuchadnezzar that God rules, but it is also "to the intent that THE LIVING may know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the basest of men." ...

Remember what Jesus said in Luke 21:24? That Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the very completion of the times of the Gentiles!

Since Zechariah 14: 1-3 shows that Jesus Christ will return in order to deliver Jerusalem from the Gentiles, it is plain that THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST WILL OCCUR SHORTLY BEFORE THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES ARE FULFILLED! (Isaiah 27:13; I Cor. 15:52) (Hoeh H. What are the Times of the Gentiles? Plain Truth, September 1955)

It was essentially after 2520 years that the Anglo-American powers rose up. That 2520 year time of the Gentiles is over. In 1970, the late evangelist Herman Hoeh wrote a similar article and added to it:

The Bible itself defines this period of seven times for us. If you turn to Revelation the twelfth chapter, and compare verses 6 and 14, you will see that the word "time" in prophecy simply means a year. Hence seven "times" would be "seven years," each containing twelve 30-day months — or a total of 2520 days (7x12x30). ...

God was dealing with the Gentiles in Daniel's day. The Gentile king Nebuchadnezzar had been sinning — living contrary to God's law. He had been taking his people on the road to world conquest and the enslavement of other nations and peoples. He had been traveling the way of war, not of peace.

God had sent His warning. The king did not heed. So God punished the nation seven years (569 to 562 D.C.) by cursing King Nebuchadnezzar with madness — till he acted and thought like a beast of the forest!

No punishment like that had ever come on any king before! No nation had ever been so cursed!

After these seven years Nebuchadnezzar's mind returned to sanity. He now repented, admitted that his ways were wrong, and actually wrote a great public document admitting before all nations what had happened to him and to his people!

After those seven years of punishment, the kingdom of Babylon was given the heart of a man. The leaders began to think in ways of peace instead of war. Notice Daniel 7:4. The kingdom of Chaldea (or Babylon) — here symbolized by a ferocious lion — stood "upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given it."

Notice the parallel. King Nebuchadnezzar, because of his sins, was punished seven literal years. At the end of that time he regained his sanity and began for the first time in his life to repent and to give up the ways of war for the way of peace. ... As He punished Israel and Judah for seven prophetic "times" — 2520 years — so would be the punishment of the Gentiles! God began to punish the nation by cursing their king for seven literal years. (Hoeh H. There is a Way of Escape. Plain Truth, 1970)

Interestingly there are 2520 days in 7 years of 360 days. Hence that also seems to point to the time when the seven-year 'peace deal' of Daniel 9:27 will be confirmed for. The 'handwriting will be on the wall' when that deal is confirmed as it will begin the countdown until the start of the Great Tribulation. It

will start 3 ½ years after that deal is confirmed, and shortly after we “see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (Matthew 24:15).

While it is important not to discount that the Great Tribulation is coming, one should also not believe it is coming before it can. It will not start in 2019 as too many events still need to take place (cf. Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:6-15). And at this stage 2022 looks like the first possible year it can begin (we will know the year once we see the confirmation of the deal of Daniel 9:27).

Once the Great Tribulation starts, there will be 42 months that the Gentiles “will tread the holy city” of Jerusalem for (Revelation 11:2).

There is Good News

After the entire seven years is over, Jesus, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), will return and destroy the predominantly Gentile powers that will be united to fight against Him (Revelation 19:19-21).

Notice also the following, which shows that the remnant of Israel will be shamed, for a time, by Gentiles but then the Lord will come:

25 “I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. 26 I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing. 27 Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase. They shall be safe in their land; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. 28 And they shall no longer be a prey for the nations, nor shall beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and no one shall make them afraid. 29 I will raise up for them a garden of renown, and they shall no longer be consumed with hunger in the land, nor bear the shame of the Gentiles anymore. 30 Thus they shall know that I, the Lord their God,

am with them, and they, the house of Israel, are My people,” says the Lord God.” (Ezekiel 34:25-30)

7 “Therefore, behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that they shall no longer say, ‘As the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ 8 but, ‘As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ And they shall dwell in their own land.” (Jeremiah 23:7-8)

The time of Gentile domination is prophesied (Ezekiel 7:24, 30:1-3, Jeremiah 10:25; Luke 21:23-24; Revelation 11:2), but will end. The old Worldwide Church of God taught:

With the second coming of Christ, the “times of the Gentiles” will at last come to an end. (Stump K. The Arab World in Prophecy. Plain Truth, December 1979, p. 38)

Jesus will establish the millennial Kingdom of God! That is good news.

The Great Tribulation Starts Prior to Daniel 11:40

It should be noted that certain Laodicean groups improperly hold to the sequence that the King of the North attacks the King of the South, then the time of Jacob’s trouble begins with the Great Tribulation and the USA and/or UK is attacked.

This is wrong and is illogical for several reasons.

First, an attack against a confederation of nations in the Middle East and North Africa (which is what the King of the South will rule) is not part of JACOB’S TROUBLE.

Secondly, the nations mentioned in the King of the South passages (Daniel 11:40-43) are not the USA nor UK nor their Anglo-Saxon descended allies. And since a particular ‘Day of the Lord’ lasts one year and comes after the Great Tribulation, Daniel 11:44-45 must come towards the END of the Day of the Lord.

In the sequence of Daniel 11, the Great Tribulation begins in verse 39, not verse 40.

Let's look at Daniel 11 starting with verse 40:

40 "At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. 41 He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. 42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels. (Daniel 11:40-43)

These passages show that a power in the Middle East and North Africa (which are currently dominated by Islam) will be defeated. Some seem to believe that the "time of the end" does not begin until verse 40, but that is a misunderstanding of how the Hebrew text should be understood. The "and" in verse 40 is not the start of the end, but a continuation of what began in verse 39 of Daniel 11. This is known by others.

For example, the Barnes Notes on the Bible states:

And at the time of the end The "time of the end" must properly denote the end or consummation of the series of events under consideration, or the matter in hand, and properly and obviously means here the end or consummation of the transactions which had been referred to in the previous part of the vision. It is equivalent to what we should say by expressing it thus: "at the winding up of the affair."

The ONLY way to reconcile that the time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) starts with the beginning of the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21) is to realize that it begins with verse 39 of the sequence in Daniel 11. Those who hold to a start of the Great Tribulation AFTER the King of the North attacks the King of the South will not know until it is too late.

Some Christians will be Protected During the Great Tribulation, Other Christians will be Persecuted

It should be noted that Jesus also called this period the hour of trial and that He promised to protect only the Philadelphia portion of the Church of God from it:

7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,

'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens":

8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie — indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 **Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world,** to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. (Revelation 3:7-11)

The Bible also makes it clear that the only ones who will be protected will first 'gather together' (Zephaniah 2:1-3).

And while some erroneously feel that Revelation 3:10 has to do with a pre-tribulation rapture for all Christians, the reality is that is NOT what Jesus said. The Bible is clear that the rest of the Church will face persecution for 3 1/2 years:

17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17).

It is because of their faithful endurance that the Philadelphians are promised protection from the Great Tribulation.

Jesus, however, chastens the Church at Laodicea, representing the bulk of Christians in the end of the church age, because of their lukewarm spirit. Lacking enough faith and in zeal, Laodicea is beset by compromise with the world, unaware that it is spiritually impoverished, naked, and in need of repentance (Revelation 3:14-18).

Because of their attitude, Jesus will vomit the Laodiceans out of His mouth and right into the Great Tribulation.

This is to wake them up and bring them to complete surrender to Him. Understanding this distinction between the final church eras allows us to understand prophecies in Revelation 12 that describe Satan's attempt to make war with the "woman"—the true Church.

The Laodicean Churches of God have so many prophetic misunderstandings that unless they repent they will NOT know when the Great Tribulation will happen until it is too late—I have documented dozens of prophetic errors held by Laodiceans (cf. <http://www.cogwriter.com/laodiceachurch.htm>).

It should be noted that Jesus only taught that the Philadelphians (Revelation 3:7-13) would be protected from this "hour of trial" (Revelation 3:10), but He did not make that promise to the Laodiceans (Revelation 3:14-22); because of wrong priorities and wrong prophetic teachings, the Laodiceans will have to go through the Great Tribulation. The Bible is clear that there are true Christians that will have to go through the 3 1/2 years of the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord (Revelation 12:17; Daniel 7:25).

Notice also what Daniel writes about two coming persecutions that the Beast king will use during this time:

24 The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings. 25 He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time (Daniel 7:24-25).

There are two times of persecution in those passages. The first is where the Beast will, "persecute the saints of the Most High," and then the second shortly afterwards when "the saints shall be given into his hand" for 3 ½ years (1 time + 2 times + ½ time = 3 ½ times or years). This persecuting Beast king is the final European King of the North. Christians have been persecuted in the past, and will be in the future.

But what about others, the non-Christians?

In addition to the warnings given by His two witnesses for 3 ½ years (Revelation 11:3), God is going to provide a warning of repentance to the world by way of three angels:

6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people-- 7 saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." 8 And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." 9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name" (Revelation 14:6-11).

God wants people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30) and though most will not listen in this age, He still wants them to be warned (and a great multitude will respond per Revelation 7:9-10).

The final time of the Gentiles includes the Day of the Lord:

2 "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says

the Lord God: "Wail, 'Woe to the day!' 3 For the day is near, Even the day of the Lord is near; It will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles. (Ezekiel 30:2-3)

Notice the prophecy for this latter time tribulation in the Hebrew scriptures:

29 But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30 When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice 31 (for the Lord your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them. (Deuteronomy 4:29-31)

Thus, help from God during these hard times will be available to the truly sincere who really strive for it.

Jesus taught:

34 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:34-36)

You need to pray and take action to be protected. That is what Jesus is telling Christians to do.

Protection is available for Philadelphian Christians.

3 ½ years after the start of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will return.

Brief Sequence and Good News

While the focus of this article has been on what the Bible teaches the Great Tribulation and the final time of the Gentiles will be like, many would like to know some specific events to look for which occur prior to the Great Tribulation.

The basic sequence begins with the fact that certain

sorrows and troubles will continue (Mark 13:5-8). This is happening. A nation will become exceedingly indebted (Habakkuk 2:6)--this is happening to the USA.

The 'peace' deal of Daniel 9:27 will be made then confirmed. This begins the countdown to the end.

A King of the North (who was a 'prince' in Daniel 9:27) and a King of the South (Daniel 11:25) will arise. Europe will get a "great army" (Daniel 11:25). We are seeing the foundations for this now.

Animal sacrifices will begin (cf. Daniel 9:27). (Note: It is possible that the King of the South could rise up prior to Daniel 9:27 or even after the sacrifices resume as could the King of the North--and his army will be greater years after the deal of Daniel 9:27 is confirmed.)

The gospel then will have been preached enough to the world as a witness for the end to come (Matthew 24:14). This seems to be related to the 'short work' of Romans 9:28--preparations for this are also occurring as we in the Continuing Church of God are working on both Matthew 24:14 and Romans 9:28.

Jewish sacrifices will be stopped (Daniel 9:27). Some Jews would like to start daily sacrifices now, but the Israeli government will not currently allow it.

Europe will reorganize into ten 'kingdoms' (not necessarily ten currently existing nations as some have improperly insisted upon) and give power to the Beast per Revelation 17:12-13. Some of this could happen earlier--and reorganization has been proposed in Europe.

The abomination of desolation will then be set up (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14) because of actions of the King of the North (Daniel 9:27; 11:31). The most faithful expect to continue to tell what is happening until they are somehow stopped (cf. Amos 8:11-12; Romans 9:28).

A decree is to be issued (Zephaniah 2:1-3) and then the most faithful Philadelphians will "fly" to the wilderness (Revelation 12:14-16) and those in Judea should flee per Jesus' statements in Matthew 24:15-19 and Mark 13:15-18. Prior to the time the Great Tribulation starts, the two witnesses will support the

work, and several days before it starts, they will get power to do their final job (Revelation 11:3-15).

Bolstered by the Antichrist, then the Great Tribulation will begin (Matthew 24:21-22; Mark 13:19-20; Daniel 11:39, 12:1b; cf. Habakkuk 2:7-8).

This will eliminate the USA and its Anglo-Saxon descended allies as nations (Daniel 11:39; Jeremiah 30:7; Habakkuk 2:7-8. The King of the South will shortly later push against the King of the North and get eliminated (Daniel 11:40-43)--those loyal to that leader will know tribulation (see also Ezekiel 30:2-8).

About a month or so less than 2 ½ years after the Great Tribulation began, the sixth seal will be opened, there will be a 'blood moon' and a darkened sun (Revelation 6:12; Joel 2:30-31; see also Blood Moons and Prophecy), then the 144,000 of Revelation 7:1-8 will be sealed.

Shortly thereafter, the seventh seal will be opened (Revelation 8:1-6) and year long Day of the Lord (Isaiah 34:8) will begin with trumpet blasts, plagues, etc. (Revelation 8:7-13; 9:1-21; 11"13-14). Shortly thereafter, the seventh seal will be opened (Revelation 8:1-6) and year long Day of the Lord (Isaiah 34:8) will begin with trumpet blasts, plagues, etc. (Revelation 8:7-13; 9:1-21; 11:13-14). The gathering for Armageddon will begin related to the sixth trumpet blast (Revelation 8:13-19; 16:12-16).

Jesus will come a second time:

28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Hebrews 9:28)

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20)

And the Kingdom of God will be established:

15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15)

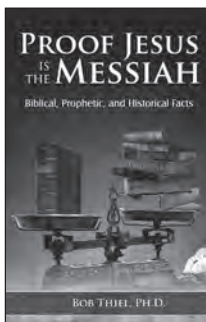
That is good news!

Do not be like others who do not think that the Great Tribulation will not come in their lifetime.

Do not be like others who think that God will protect them because He loves them. While God loves everyone, Jesus only promised to protect the Philadelphian Christians during the Great Tribulation. The bulk of the Christians alive during the Great Tribulation will NOT be protected (cf. Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:5-7).

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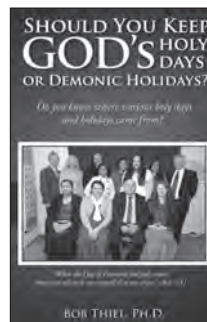
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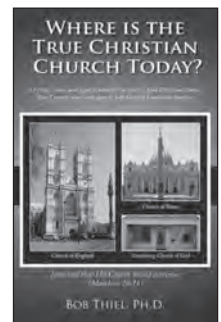
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