

Comfort One Another With These Words

Holger Neubauer

It's simple physics: cause and effect. How we behave (the cause) relates to our relationships whether good or bad (the effect). Christianity is greatly about correcting our habits for the betterment of our relationships – both with God and man. How things become people's habit of behavior, therefore, holds great interest to me.

I wonder sometimes how certain reading and interpreting habits have developed. How is it we can read over passages of the Bible, know the very simple words and their meanings without any trouble, and yet, completely miss the intended message or how they are affected in the overall context? How did that habit develop? I don't often have a good answer to that question; but what I do know is that it is our job to help make correction of the bad habits so that our relationships with God and man may be improved.

Take, for example, how often 1st Thessalonians chapter 4 is appealed to without ever considering the stated reason why the apostle was writing on the subjects he discusses in verses 13 through 18. Verse 13 through 15a introduce the apostle's thought process and provides us his motive for writing what does.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord...”

First, he recognizes his duty to his Lord and brethren to do what he can to stave off ignorance. As an apostle, Paul had been endowed with immense power and authority, but he saw it as a tool to help others learn. He saw himself as a teacher. In proceeding to write what he does, he is trying to provide for what the Christians may have lacked in their knowledge or memory.

Second, the subject over which some of the Christians in Thessalonica were having trouble was that some of their own number were now “asleep” - i.e. in their graves. They had experienced biological death; and, those still alive, due to some lacking in their knowledge, were sorrowing for them. We'll need to identify the nature of that sorrow in this passage. More on that in a moment.

Third, Paul did not view their sorrow as something good or natural; it was something they did not need to experience, because knowledge, as opposed to ignorance, would prevent such sorrow. This deserves a bit more discussion.

Is it not natural to have a sense of loss when someone we love is irrevocably missing from our day-to-day lives? Of course, it is. Is it wrong to be sad when we experience this sense of loss? Of course, it isn't. Do we have a contradiction in the scripture with something that cannot be avoided in our emotional attachments to one another? Does Christianity teach us to so love one another that our hearts and minds become as one, only to expect us to be unaffected when a part of ourselves is gone? Certainly, no. How

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do we reconcile it, then? The apostle is clearly writing to Christians, telling them why they should not have sorrow. What may we conclude?

Why did Paul find it necessary to write to them not to sorrow, when sorrow for the departed souls would be the most natural emotion to feel? It is because Paul was not writing to convince them not to feel loss when their loved ones pass from this physical world. He was combating outside influences in how they considered their faithful dead.

He qualifies the type of sorrow he is trying to educate out of the Thessalonian Christian's heart by saying, "even as others which have no hope" (v. 13). He didn't want them to feel sorrow as the result of an incorrect idea regarding what the resurrection is. Others who "have no hope" would be unbelievers who had died, forever sealing their fate of separation from God.

The Christians among them had not, and would not, miss the joy of eternal life, even if their physical bodies had expired.

When Paul mentioned their source of confidence, that "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again..." he placed what followed as the logical conclusion of that confidence: "...God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus" (1Thes. 4:14). As sure as their confidence is that Jesus rose from the dead, they may be just as sure that when Jesus returned, those whose bodies had expired while living faithfully "in Jesus" would be brought with Him upon Jesus' return.

Pause for a moment and reflect. Paul is saying to them, 'They are not lost. In the day of the Lord, God will bring them with Him.' Would the knowledge Paul was imparting (or reminding them) be comforting if there was a prevailing thought that the hope was only in this world, if the body lived (see 1Corinthians 15:12 – 34 where the Sadducees doctrine denying resurrection seem to be catching an influence. Is it possible Paul was fighting that here in Thessalonica also?)

By way of an explanation that God would bring the faithful-dead with Jesus upon His return, Paul reminds them of something he had probably already taught them: "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord..." (1Thes. 4:15a). He tells them what Jesus had already said on the matter. In Matthew 24:31, the Lord speaks of how, in His coming in His Kingdom, the angels would be sent to "gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

It is not an inappropriate connection to make in these thoughts to remember the Lord's words that address the living and the dead:

John 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

And this is a clear reference to the prophesy of Daniel 12:2; a reference that Jesus Himself also made in the Olivet discourse in Matthew 24:15, citing Daniel 12:11. There is no avoiding these obvious references and allusions. Paul was describing to the Thessalonians the events of the resurrection that Jesus had discussed and Daniel (and others) had prophesied. Paul was telling the church in Thessalonica, they need not be concerned about their faithful dead because they were about to experience the fulfillment of those prophesies and promise of the Lord in being resurrected to life.

Just here, a quick correction of a popular notion would be appropriate. The realm where disembodied spirits would go, known in scripture as *Sheol* – the place of the grave, in Hebrew; and *Hades* – the place of departed spirits, in Greek, was the holding place for the dead, and it is commonly understood to have contained two regions. There was the place of torment, where the wicked and unforgiven souls resided in conscious awareness of their eternal doom; and paradise, illustrated by being called the place of being comforted in Abraham's bosom, which is the place where Jesus promised the repentant thief on the cross, He would be with him on that day. This is where all the saints of all the ages leading up to the resurrection would be. But, in the resurrection, Hades would be emptied, and each soul would receive

what was due. This is how Paul sought to comfort the Thessalonians who feared for the fate of their lost brethren.

But just as reminder, let me ask, how could this be of any comfort if it were not to occur in their own lifetimes? The judgment of the wicked Jewish nation was under consideration in Jesus' words from Matthew 24, and He did tell them this "gathering together" was to occur within their generation (see Matt. 24:34). Daniel, too, indicated that the resurrection (Dan. 12:2) would occur in connection to the Judgment of Israel, in a "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" (Dan. 12:1 cf. Matt. 24:21, 22) and "when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered" (Dan. 12:7 - NKJV).

Now, if we can easily see that the shattering of Judah was in the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem, we cannot draw any other conclusion than that the resurrection – of which all of these inspired men spoke of so similarly – occurred also within the lifetimes of the first generation of Christians.

That being so, Paul's words to the Christians in Thessalonica would be comforting indeed. He would even remind them that the coming of the Lord to accomplish all these events would surprise the wicked, but not they who believed (see 1Thess. 5:1-5 – notice the pronouns being very specific to the Christians in Thessalonica).

As he continues to cite "the word of the Lord," in 1Thess. 4:16, Paul reminds them of the Lord's descent from the heavens with a shout, in the voice of the "archangel" (which is an interesting study by itself). These are the very sentiments of the Lord from Matthew 24:31.

The gathering entailed that the dead would be spiritually raised to their immortal body (1Cor. 15:35 – 57; 2Cor. 4:18ff; Phil. 3:21; 1Jn. 3:2). They rise "first" in the order of events. That the living would not precede them being an emphasis in Paul's discourse gives further evidence that the living Christians were concerned about those who had passed.

But at this point in our main text is where people get, honestly, but very, confused. Let's look at it carefully: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1Thess. 4:17).

We have no trouble determining who the "we who are alive and remain" are as long as we recall that this letter had to have a specific meaning to those of the first generation of Christians to whom Paul wrote. Without that perspective, we can go off into any number of possibilities, and many, many have. The "we" (with whom Paul interestingly includes himself) are those Christians who would live to see the AD 70 coming of the Lord to punish His enemies and reward His saints with rest.

We may spend a little time studying the Greek words represented in English by the expression, "caught up together with them," and it would probably be time well spent; but, we would likely remain just as confused regarding what happened to those Christians who remained to witness the Day of the Lord. It is the Greek words translated "to meet" that will give us clarity. It's a rather unusual term.

It comes from, *eis apantesin*, which holds a bit more in concept that the word "meet" lets on in our casual English use. The preposition, *eis* is relatively familiar: "into, unto, to, towards, for, among" are the most common translations, but

it is always forward looking in purpose or direction. The noun, *apantesin*, however, is not very popular with commentators and it is briefly handled by major lexicographers. When used in attachment with the "coming of the Lord", the word carries the idea, not just of a random encounter, but a purposeful going, meeting, and *accompanying back* in a gesture of hospitality to one deemed deserving of honor.

This word, *apantesin*, only occurs in the scripture three other times. Two times it is right within the context of the Lord's Olivet Discourse describing the events of His coming by way of the parable of the ten virgins. In verse 1 of that context, the expression is, "...went forth to meet the bridegroom." In verse 6, the word is found in the expression, "...go ye out to meet him." In both cases, the virgins were

intentionally going out to honor the Bridegroom (Christ), to meet Him, and accompany Him to His destination. (More on that destination in a moment.)

The only other time the word is used in this form is in Acts 28:14 – 16. Paul and company were headed to Rome. Some heard of their *coming*, departed from Rome to *meet* them, and accompany them back to Rome.

This was a fairly common practice in the ancient world. While the Greek word may not be used in these following examples, the concept of the practice is clear:

- Genesis 14:17 Where “the king of Sodom went out to meet [Abram] after his return” from rescuing Lot.
- Genesis 18:1ff Abraham runs from the gate of his tent to meet the Lord and his angels to ask that they stay long enough for him to provide a meal.
- Genesis 19:1ff Lot rises up to meet the two oncoming angels to the city of Sodom and requests that they stay at his home.
- Genesis 32:6 Esau goes out from his home to meet Jacob coming back from his time with Laban.
- Matthew 21:7 – 11 the multitudes go out from Jerusalem to greet, honor, and accompany Jesus as he rides the donkey into Jerusalem.

The concept Paul was communicating by his word choice was that the living Christians would go, meet the Lord in the air where the resurrected saints were, and accompany them back here, to the world of men. There can be no mistaking the unambiguous words of the declaration made by the great voice in Heaven heard by John, as he records:

Revelation 21:2 “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

The location of God’s dwelling is now among men. The Heaven itself has come down to men. And Paul was telling the Christians, in his day, that they would witness and even participate in the event.

Was it a physical structure, a city made of literal stone and mortar? Obviously not. The kingdom was not to come with observation (cf. Lk. 17:20). Therefore, the coming of the Lord in His kingdom was also an event that could not be observed with the eye of flesh. All of what Paul was describing was spiritual, and unobservable by the carnal senses.

What message did the church in Thessalonica take away from Paul’s addressing their concerns about those of their number who had “fallen asleep”? They were comforted with the words of the apostle’s affirmation that they were not gone, permanently imprisoned in the grave, but they would indeed be resurrected. And in fact, would precede those who still lived during the events surrounding the coming of the Lord.

What comfort is there for us? If you are not asking that question, you might be getting caught up into the academic and historical study and failing to make application to what may be profited by the study. There are many, many lessons for us in the principles we learn as we study what happened to the church in the early stages.

- God keeps His promises, no matter how displeasing they might be, and certainly for those glorious promises He always wanted for mankind.
- God’s disposition is to reward the humble and obedient (See Matthew 5:3 – 10).

- God's kingdom, being an eternal kingdom (Daniel 2:44; Isaiah 9:7; et. al.), it is still present today; and, therefore, God desires to give mankind the blessings of His presence and eternal life with Him (See Revelation 22:17).
- The conditions of entrance exemplified by the church (Acts 2:38; 8:37, 38; 17:30; et. al.) as it was being built have not changed; and, therefore, all spiritual blessings are available "in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3), just as it was then. This makes man's first and highest priority (cf. Matthew 6:33) getting into that relationship with Christ (cf. Galatians 3:24-29).
- One of those terms of entrance into Christ is that we share in His death, burial, and resurrection with Him in a spiritual way – not symbolically, but the sincere, full-hearted belief in God's promises that our hearts, our minds, our consciences are being made free from sin (See all of Romans 6; 10:9, 10; Colossians 2:12).
- The resurrection that we have by coming to be "in Christ" is the new beginning, the new birth (Jn 3:3, 5) the new life (Rom. 6:4), the eternal life (Jn. 11:25, 26), the entrance into Christ's kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28). While living, and passed the stage of bodily death, we have the promise of God for life eternal, if we will remain faithful (cf. 1Jn 1:3 – 2:5).

Shall we not *Comfort One Another With These Words?* [HN]

One Jot or One Tittle

Holger Neubauer

The Lord said, "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). When Jesus referred to this jot, He referenced the Hebrew "yod" the smallest Hebrew letter. The "tittle" referred to a stroke of the pen by which some letters were distinguished. The language of Jesus is very powerful and clear. No part of the Old Testament could pass until it was all fulfilled. By what hermeneutic then, can anyone say that Jesus was only speaking about a **part** of the Old Testament? The very language forbids it.

Let us consider. When Jesus spoke of the "jot" and the "tittle" did He include prophecy? Did he include Isaiah 53 which foretold His suffering? Does the jot and tittle include Moses' prophecy of what would take place in the "latter days" of Israel (Deuteronomy 31:27)? Does this include the Gentiles coming into the kingdom (Isaiah 11:10)? If Jesus referred to the whole of the Old Testament, which is irrefutably true, then by what stretch of an unbalanced hermeneutic did Jesus exclude the prophecy of Zechariah 14:1-11 which foretold his return and destruction of Jerusalem? Why is not Daniel 12:2 included which speaks of resurrection? The whole of the Old Testament includes the whole of the Old Testament. Neither the Cross nor Pentecost satisfy the requirements of the "one jot" or "one tittle" of the Law.

The word "fulfilled" in Matthew 5:18 is genetai, 3rd p. sing., 2 aor., of ginomai. Rienicker and Rogers says of this word, "to become, to come to pass, to happen." Jesus was predicting the whole of the Old Testament, "to become, to come to pass, to happen." The very language demands that we include the prophecy of the Old Testament. Jesus used the same word in Matthew 24:34 which says, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." The word fulfilled therefore includes prophecy! Jesus said in Luke 21:22, "These be the days of vengeance that all things which are written may be fulfilled." Again, by what unnatural stretching of Jesus' statement does anyone have the right to say that the Lord did not mean the whole of the Old Testament? He most certainly did. Jesus in fact included all prophecy in Matthew 5:18. Some attempt to use Psalm 102:25 as a prophecy that has not yet come to pass suggesting that the physical earth is the subject of the phrase, "They shall perish." The context refers to Israel as

Psalm 102:25 says, "the people which shall be created." The heavens and earth is simply Hebraic poetry and refers to Old Covenant Israel (Isaiah 51:16; Deuteronomy 31:27-32:1).

The Law certainly was done away by means of the Cross, but not at the Cross. This is what Colossians 2:14-17 teaches. Please read carefully, "Blotting out the handwriting of the ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, taking them out of the way, nailing them to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of holy day, or the new moon or of the Sabbath days: Which **ARE** a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

How could Paul say that the things of the law "ARE" a shadow of things to come if the law was done away? Paul uses the word "eimi" which has no past tense. If Paul meant to teach the Law was already past then, he could have used the word "eien" which means "past" or "were." The body in this passage is the church (Colossians 1:18). Yet, the true picture of the church was still in the future because it still had remnants of the law in it. The true spiritual picture of the church was soon to be revealed. This is what Peter affirmed, as "salvation was to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5). The salvation that was preached on Pentecost was about to be fully revealed! As God revealed the gospel the law was being done away!

Now please consider:

1. Acts 6:14, The Jews accused Stephen of saying, "Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." Why did these Jews accuse Stephen of saying that Jesus "shall change" the customs of Moses, when it would have been a stronger argument to say that Jesus "had" changed the customs Moses delivered? The laws had not been changed for the disobedient Jews. The only way to escape the condemnation of the Law was to obey the gospel. This is strong evidence that the Law was still in force when Stephen died.
2. Acts 10:13, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." Why 8-10 years after Pentecost does Peter and the whole Jewish church still keep Old Testament dietary laws? If you answer ignorance, then you implicitly agree that ignorance buoyed the entire church and at the same time kept the Gentiles out of the church. This is not harmless ignorance. If this ignorance persisted for 8-10 years after being baptized today, could that person be in a saved state? Can one believe after being a Christian for 8 years that only the Caucasian race should have the gospel today? Prior to this event Peter and all the church considered the Gentiles an "unclean" people (Acts 10:28). Since God could have revealed this at Pentecost, we must conclude that it was God's will that the Jewish practices would continue in the church until such time that God saw fit to end them. God had to repeat the vision of eating the previously unclean meats three times before Peter got the message! This passage demands an incremental revealing of God's word which in turn allows for a gradual doing away of the law for Jewish Christians.
3. Acts 13:40,41 "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." How does Paul quote from a dead law (Hab. 1:5), to bring dead promises upon these disobedient Jews if the Law was dead to them? The Law was alive to the disobedient Jews, for the Law demanded they obey the prophet who was like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-18).
4. Acts 15:21, "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day." Why did the Jerusalem council make this statement? It was no doubt because the Jews as Jews continued to keep the practices of the Law. The argument that the apostles and elders settle is not whether the Jews had to keep the Law but whether or not the Gentiles had to keep the Law. What the council never debated was whether the Jews were to keep

the Law. There was no lack of teaching about the Law in “every city” because Jewish Christians also attended synagogue on Sabbath day. If this is not an overlapping of laws, then what was it?

5. Acts 21:20, “Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law.” 15-20 years after Pentecost the Jewish believers in Judea are still following the law. Were all these Jewish believers apostates? Were they all spiritual adulterers? Or was the law still being practiced by Jewish Christians? God in His own time period was doing away with the Law. This verse alone is proof that the law must have went away gradually.
6. Acts 22:12, “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there.” Why was Ananias chosen to baptize Saul? Ananias was disciple, a Christian (Acts 9:10). How could he be devout according to the Law if he was a Christian? If the Old Law had passed for the Jews, Ananias could not have been called devout! God took a 40-year (A.D 30-70) period to incrementally reveal the truth, for the Jews simply could not bear the truth all at once! Did not Paul say, “we know in part and we prophesy in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9). Jesus said to the apostles, “I have yet many things to say to you now, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). The gospel was winding up while the Law was winding down.
7. 1 Corinthians 15:56, “the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.” If the law here is not the Law of Moses, then Paul is arguing that the strength of sin is the gospel. This would be nigh blaspheme. The gospel destroys sin, it was the Law of Moses that was the “ministration of death” (2Cor 3:7). I challenge every preacher with a conscience to think before he calls the strength of sin the gospel. The Old Covenant Law of Moses was the strength of sin and nothing else! This verse is sufficient proof that the Law had strength until Jesus returned in AD 70.
8. 2 Corinthians 3:7, “which glory was to be done away.” Paul is referencing the glory which Moses received at Sinai. Paul is referencing the whole of the law including the whole of the Old Testament. The Greek “katargouamenou” is a present passive participle. Literally “being done away” as Zondervan's Parallel New Testament Greek affirms. The NKJV corroborates this use. The Old Law was passing away at that time. Paul's statement here taught false doctrine if the Law had passed away at the Cross. But Paul taught the TRUTH!
9. 2 Corinthians 3:11, The NKJV accurately translates that the law was “being done away.” The law was being done away as Paul wrote! I beg the reader to get out any Greek Interlinear and notice that the law was being done away!
10. 2 Corinthians 3:18, “are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” The NKJV says, “are being changed.” The Jewish church was steadily taking on the spiritual change from glory to glory. Isaiah asks, “Can a nation be built in a day?” (Isaiah 66:8). The traditional position avers Yes, and points to Pentecost, but God says NO, and points to the fall of Jerusalem. The A.D. 33 advocates are in a real bind here! Notice now the continuity of thought of the Hebrew letter which tells us that the coming of the Lord would do away with the law.
 - a. **Hebrews 8:13**, “A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” How many times does God have to say it? The law was being done away! One critic avers that the law was being done away from the writer's perspective. Was not the writer an inspired man giving divine commentary? Only desperation can explain such misunderstanding!
 - b. **Hebrews 9:28**, “and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” This is the salvation that was “about to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). It was the last time when John wrote (1 John 2:18). This would take place at Jesus' second coming!

- c. **Hebrews 10:9,10**, “Then said he, Lo, **I come** to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that he might establish the second.” This is another reference to the second coming of Jesus. Jesus was coming to take away the first (Old) testament to establish the second (New) Testament. This harmonizes beautifully with Matthew 17:1-5 as Jesus pointed to a time when His voice would be exclusively heard. Peter would say the Lord made known his coming on the “holy mount” (2 Peter 1:16-18).
- d. **Hebrews 10:37**, “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” All three texts refer to the same coming. He was coming for salvation, to do away with the law, and He was coming in a very little while. The original has, “micron, hoson, hoson.” Literally, a little, little while. There is no justification for separating this coming from Jesus' second coming of the same context (9:28)! The second coming would take place in a “very little while.” This coming would do away with the Law!

Though the law was slowly disappearing for the Jewish Christians (the Gentiles were never under the law), the whole of the law would judge the disobedient Jews. This is how not one jot or tittle would fail till all be fulfilled. The law demanded that the Jews honor their prophet (Christ) or be destroyed (Deut 18:15-18). As the Jews obeyed the gospel they became “dead to the law” and escaped its condemnation (Romans 7:4). The law could no longer condemn them for they were free in Christ (Rom 8:1,2). Romans 10:4 says, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” Notice the Law ended for “everyone” that became a believer.

But what of the law for the unbeliever? Those Jews who did not obey the gospel had the Law to condemn them, for their mouths were stopped by the Law (Rom 3:19). Every jot and tittle would come upon the disobedient Jews as their temple and life would be destroyed. Isaiah 66:11 says, “Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire.” This came to pass when Jerusalem fell. Not one jot or tittle failed until all was fulfilled!

Now hear again Jesus' own words, “These be the days of vengeance that all things which are written may be fulfilled” (Luke 21:22). [HN]

Q&A: Is RE a Fellowship Issue?

Steve Baisden

QUESTION: Do I have to believe that all has been fulfilled in order to go to heaven? Is this a salvation issue? **ANSWER:** I came to the decision that I must accept this truth around April 2014. I believe that had I died in March 2014 I would have been saved, yet at that time I did not believe what I do now. I was a Christian, seeking to grow as all Christians should. As I learn Bible truths, I must accept those truths, no exception! I think every Christian **MUST** have this attitude! We are to continue to learn and grow in Christ and as we do, we are held accountable for those things we learn and understand (Lk 12:48)! I do not believe a new born babe in Christ, baptized this morning if he died this afternoon would be held just as accountable as an Elder of 30 years in the church? Do you think that a new born babe **MUST** understand everything, or do you think there is some grace there? I know there is grace there, because I know, **NO ONE** knows everything and we are all commanded to grow in knowledge! Must a babe in Christ understand this before they can be saved **NO!**

BUT, what about that person that has been introduced to it, has it explained, is skilled in the word of God, and then still rejects it, after having been given enough time and opportunity to digest it? Would that person be saved? I could have no confidence in such a person. Maybe the words of Paul would be applicable here; 1Ti 5:24 "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after." There is no way that I could know some exact point when someone is being dishonest and rejecting it. Please tell me how can someone reject the counsel of God and at the same time

be pleasing to God? It took me some time to see this truth all the while I was still seeking it. So, I will not try to force this on anybody and tell them they must see it and get it within some arbitrary time period! BUT, those who cause unscriptural division (sin) because they have not "seen it yet" and have falsely accused (sin) those who do understand it, are guilty of those sins, and they must repent before it is too late!

Now this brings us to another problem, division in the church. What should we do with those who cause division? Rom 16:17 "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." Now all of the sudden we have an obligation to mark and avoid those who have falsely condemned. Are you in fellowship with those who have done this? If what I now believe is true, and IT IS, then God wants it taught. God wants His preachers and teachers to teach all the counsel of God and that is what I am set for! "Woe unto to me if I preach not the gospel" (2 Cor 9:16).

Is this a salvation issue? YES, it is! In more ways than one!

The Date of Revelation

Steve Baisden

Many come to this book looking at it as if it has great mystical powers of prophecy for the future. Others come to this book and think that it is talking about events far removed from the first century that have occurred throughout history. Events like the coming of the Catholic denomination, or WWII, or Russia rising up against the U.S., etc. Many fanciful prophetic images have been imagined possible from this grand book. It is a mystery to many and to such a degree that many people will not even read it.

The introduction to the book of Revelation is the key to understanding this marvelous book! In the first three verses God tells us how to "hear" and "keep" the things written therein.

Rev 1:1 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants **things which must shortly come to pass**; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:"

Rev 1:2 "Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw."

Rev 1:3 "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: **for the time is at hand.**"

God sets the context immediately by telling us the things in the book were "at hand" and "must shortly come to pass."

John wrote the book 2000 years ago. If we allow God to be true then I would expect, even demand, that those things written in Revelation were "at hand" to the time when John wrote it. That cannot mean thousands of years into the future. How far off was the kingdom when Jesus said repent for the kingdom is "at hand"? How far off is summer, when a tree starts putting forth leaves? Jesus used this analogy in (Mt 24:32) to explain it was "nigh." The word "nigh" in (Mt 24) is translated "at hand" in (Rev 1:3, 22:10). This divine definition should serve any honest disciple in understanding how God uses that word. No one would think when the leaves start coming out on trees that summer is 2000 + years in the future!

It never ceases to amaze me how some can simply skirt around context building words and phrases whenever those words and phrases do not line up with their current belief. Rom 3:4 "let God be true, but every man a liar."

Another key to properly analyzing any scripture is how to use internal and external evidences. Internal evidence simply means those things taken from within the Bible. External evidence simply means

evidence taken from outside of the Bible. Can we use external evidence as a proof for internal evidence? Yes. But we should not make the mistake of allowing external evidence supremacy over internal evidence. The external evidence must fit and harmonize with the internal evidence in corroboration.

Brother James Burton Coffman writes about this problem when dealing with the book of Revelation: "The late date in the times of Domitian relies almost totally upon a single quotation from Irenaeus which is not necessarily that reliable, being quite ambiguous also. As Wallace said, 'The statement of Irenaeus meant that John was seen or the Apocalypse was seen; and it has little value, if any, as evidence.' His quotation does not even mention 'the writing' of Revelation, but refers solely to the time when certain unnamed persons are alleged to have 'seen' either the apostle or the prophecy, nobody knows which. This proves nothing. Besides that: IF he meant the Apocalypse was seen, and if it had been originally composed in Aramaic and later translated into Greek (as alleged by some), then Irenaeus' quotation could have reference to the Greek translation, if indeed it referred to the Revelation at all. There goes the whole case for the late date." (J.B. Coffman, Revelation, Pg 4)

Internal evidence actually demands that Nero was the Ruler when John was writing the book of Revelation. Rev 17:10 "And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space." John writes five kings are fallen and one IS. Josephus, the noted historian who was contemporary with John, numbers the Roman emperors so that there can be no mistake about it. 1) Julius, 2) Augustus, 3) Tiberius, 4) Caius, 5) Claudius, are the five fallen and the one who "now is" NERO! Nero reigned from 54 to 68 AD. This demands the book must have been written between 54 and 68 AD! Some will argue that Julius was not the first Caesar. They argue this in an attempt to get past the AD 70 date. But even if this is true, you would then have Galba as Caesar and his reign ended in January 68 AD. Still prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in AD 70.

Consider what Paul said in (Acts 20:27) "for I have not shunned to declare ALL the counsel of God." Is the book of Revelation a part of the counsel of God? It certainly is! Then Paul taught what John was teaching in Revelation prior to AD 70. Jesus said in (Mat 24:14) "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Paul again confirms that Jesus words were true; (Col 1:23) says the gospel had gone to every creature under heaven and this, too was before AD 70. Knowing this to be true and knowing Revelation is a part of the gospel, we know it had gone to every creature under heaven just as Paul said it had before AD 70. Further, Peter wrote to the churches of Asia (1Pet 1:1), and he wrote to them about the same things that John had written to them about... the things "at hand" (1Pet 4:17, Rev 1:3).

Also, consider **the miraculous age only lasted for period of forty years**. Micah 7:15 "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous (miraculous) things." Both brothers Guy Woods and Franklin Camp used this passage as proof to the passing of miracles at the destruction of Jerusalem. Israel was in the wilderness wandering for forty years, and this is the amount of time that God would give miracles. To this agrees Jesus and the Apostles. 1Co 1:7-8 "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul told the Corinthian's they would have the miraculous gifts until the end, waiting for the coming of Christ. Jesus said He was coming in AD 70 to destroy Jerusalem (Lk 21:20-32, Mt 24, Mk 13). When Jesus came, the miraculous gifts ceased (1Cor 13:8-10)! **Make no mistake John's miraculous gifts (and this would include His miraculous ability to write scripture) would end by AD 70.** No way could the book have been written after that!

Even brother James Burton Coffman concurs with this analogy. Brother Coffman quotes Robinson and affirmed that the entire New Testament was dated prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. (J.B Coffman, Revelation, Page 5)

More internal evidence is found in (Rev 11). Rev 11:1 "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." The Temple of God and the altar could NOT have been measured if they were not there. Rev 11:2 "But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." The Holy City was still there and had not yet been tread under foot of the Gentiles. Jesus said this would happen in (Lk 21:20-32) and said it would take place when Jerusalem was compassed with armies, in that generation. Rev 11:8 "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." Can there be any doubt as to where Jesus was crucified...JERUSALEM!

Remember, John was writing about things that had to "shortly come to pass" things "at hand." He was writing about events happening with the Holy City Jerusalem. This can only mean he wrote it before Jerusalem's destruction in AD70.

Although much more could be given, this article has given ample proof of the early date of Revelation. Brothers Foy Wallace, Gene West, Art Ogden, James B Coffman, and many other preachers in the church of Christ also agree.

The martyred souls under the Altar of God asked the Lord how long would it be until judgment and **vengeance** (Rev 6:9-10). Jesus answered; (Luk 21:20,22) "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. For these be the days of **vengeance**, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." AMEN! [SB]