

The Casting Down of Satan

Steve Baisden

From the beginning, we read of Satan influencing people to sin (Gen 3). Satan deceived the woman and influenced her to do that which God had said to not do. In the book of Job, we find Satan hard at work bringing about real life catastrophes, doing harm and hurt to Job and his family. In the New Testament, we find real and literal demon possession taking place. In Mt 4 the Bible tells us the Devil was tempting our Lord to bow to him and tried to get Jesus to do that which should not be done. Again, this took place in a literal fashion with the Devil literally interacting with the Lord.

Just as Satan existed from the beginning, we also find a promise of Satan's defeat and the hope of removing Satan. Ultimately the Lord would be victorious over Satan; (Gen 3:14-15) "And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Interestingly Paul cited Gen 3:15 dealing with the bruising of Satan's head and said it this way; "And the God of peace shall bruise (crush) Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" (Rom 16:20).

Jesus promised He would fulfill every prophecy of the old law. In fact, every jot and tittle of the law had to be fulfilled before the Law could end (Mt 5:18). Certainly, the bruising of Satan's head was a prophecy in the Old Law that Jesus knew about and He still said "every jot and tittle of the Law could not pass till ALL was fulfilled." Jesus also told us when the fulfillment of all that was written would take place (Lk 21:20, 22, 32) when Jerusalem was compassed with armies in Jesus' generation, that would be the days of vengeance when all things written would be fulfilled. Before going any farther in this article, we must ask, do we believe Jesus? Do we really have faith in what the word of God tells us? Jesus said all things written would be fulfilled by AD 70 (Lk 21:20-32). This includes the "bruising" (crushing) of Satan's head. This by itself should tell us there is more to the story and that the traditional view must be missing something! Ask yourself, has the Old Testament Law ended or not? If you say yes, then every jot and tittle of it has been fulfilled. Or you have Jesus saying something false.

Before moving too fast let's take a look at some other passages that talk about the destruction of the Serpent, the Devil. In Isa 27, we read of the destruction of "Leviathan" the "crooked serpent" and we find that this slaying would take place "in that day." What day was this? It was the day that the Lord would bring salvation and establish his domain in the mountain and destroy the old city that once stood there (Isa 25-26)! There should be no doubt this is in reference to Isa 2, Joel 2, Acts 2, 1Cor 15:55-56 and Rev 20! Again, before moving on, ask yourself if we have salvation now available? In the day, it was made a reality, in the day the Old was removed and the New established, the Bible says in **that** day it was available and completed and in **that** day the "crooked serpent" was destroyed. Was Isaiah wrong? Zechariah also tells of the time of the end for the unclean spirit (Satan). Zec 13:1-2 says "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass IN THAT DAY, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I WILL CAUSE THE PROPHETS AND THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT TO PASS OUT OF THE LAND" [emp mine SB]. Notice here that if you hold the position that there are no new prophecies and they have ceased then you must

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also hold that the "UNCLEAN SPIRIT" has also ceased! But just in case please read Zec 12-14 and you will see how this is talking about the time when salvation would come and Jerusalem would be destroyed. This cannot be at the cross! Is Zechariah wrong? What did Jesus say about everything written? Jesus affirmed everything written would be fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem and that the Old Law would NOT cease till it was ALL fulfilled (Mt 5:17-18, Lk 21:20-32)! Jesus and the Apostles knew what Isaiah, Zechariah, and Moses said. So they give us even more information about the destruction of Satan.

In Mt 12:22-30, Jesus tells that before the strong man, "Beelzebub" (Satan), could be cast out that Satan's house must first be entered, his goods spoiled, and he must be bound. Jesus was illustrating that He had come into Satan's house, He was spoiling Satan's goods, and that He was binding Satan at that time! Jesus and the disciples were casting out demons, preaching, and teaching truth in fulfillment of Moses, Zechariah, and Isaiah's prophecies. Jesus said in Jn 12:31, "NOW is the judgment of this world: NOW shall the prince of this world [Satan, SB] be cast out." Friends, again I ask will you not believe our Lord? Jesus was talking about what Moses, Isaiah, and Zechariah had predicted; that in the last days, when Jerusalem would fall and the church of Christ (salvation) would be here in its completeness, is when the devil would be cast down! The Lord clearly believed it and wanted us to believe it!

Revelation speaks of the casting down and final demise of Satan. Rev 20:2, tells us that the Dragon (that old Serpent, the Devil) would be bound 1000 years. Is this not exactly what Jesus said He was doing in Mt 12 and Jn 12? Yes, it certainly is and He even sent out his disciples to bind Satan during their great commission (Acts 5:16, 8:7). Yes, Satan was being bound with a chain (Rev 20:2). But what does a chain do? It limits the distance one can go, just like a dog on a chain can only go so far, so too Satan was being limited until his final crushing! By the way, please note, the 1000 years of Rev 20:2 is no more literal than the key to the bottomless pit, the chain, or the dragon! These are all symbolic figures and should not be taken literally (Rev 1:1). In Rev 12:12 Satan knew his time was short; he knew he did not have a literal 1000 years. The 1000 years referenced quality not quantity. It referenced the greatest generation that would ever be (Dan 12:1), when all things written would be fulfilled (Lk 21:20-32), when the old covenant world would pass and the new covenant world would come (Mt 24) where righteousness dwells eternally through the church Rev 12:10

In Rev 20:3 Satan was shut up and bound (this is the binding of the strong man's house of Mt 12, Jn 12) and he was bound a thousand years (figurative language) after which he would be loosed for a little season. Rev 20:7 when the thousand years expired Satan would be loosed. Watch carefully now how this takes place. Rev 20:8-9 Satan would then go out, deceive the nations, and gather them to battle against the "beloved city." This "beloved city" is the Holy city of (Rev 11:2) where our Lord was crucified (Rev 11:8) JERUSALEM! Yes, Moses, Isaiah, and Zechariah all wrote of this great event and here John was writing about this same event just before its culminating point, for **the time was at hand** (Rev 1:3, 22:10).

At that time Rev 20:10 says the devil was then cast into the lake of fire and brimstone forever! Notice this is exactly what the prophets of old said, this is exactly what Jesus said, this is exactly what Paul said and NOW John in the book of Revelation is giving us the exact details of it! John was NOT contradicting our Lord or the Prophets!

Is Satan now cast down into that lake of fire and brimstone? YES, HE IS, or all of the Bible is wrong!

But how can this be? All we have to do is look around us and see all the evil that Satan is doing now, right? WRONG! When is the last time Satan came, and spoke with people, gave them a little nudge with his elbow, and tempted them in a literal way to do that which is wrong? When is the last time a REAL demon possession took place? If you have Satan alive and working in this world the way he once did, then you have Satan having more power and influence than the Lord! Remember Zec 13 said the prophets and the unclean spirit would pass at the same time! But this does not take away the influence that is left in this world because of Satan! Satan's influence is all around us. Satan has been destroyed he no longer has direct literal influence in this world today and yet Satan exists in the hearts of people because they are

serving him through their actions. Take away sinful actions and Satan cannot do anything in this world today! Does Satan exist? YES, IN HELL and in the hearts of those that do evil! BUT THERE IS NO MORE DIRECT INTERACTIONS AND INFLUENCE AS THERE ONCE WAS!

Jas 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

Jas 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

Jas 1:15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Jas 1:16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

It must be accepted that Satan ruled that age (Pre-AD 70). In Luke 10:18-29 Jesus beheld Satan's fall from heaven (Not literal "heaven" but from his lofty estate of ruler in that world) and Jesus gave power to the disciples to stomp out Satan's direct influence and operations! The age to come was Christianity where Satan could NO LONGER work his miracles or influence people in a direct literal manner as he once did. We are in a different world today make no mistake!

Is Satan here with us today? Literally... NO, he has been cast into Hell! But he is in the hearts of people who wantonly sin... and, in that way, he is alive and well!

Friends, can we honestly say the Devil is doing all the evil in this world? When we do that, we do exactly what the Devils influence wants us to do, we attempt to shift the blame from those who are truly responsible and place it where it does not belong! We have personal responsibility and we cannot place the blame on Satan. Why? Jesus cast him out as the Bible clearly states! [SB]

Q&A: Did Jesus Die Spiritually?

Steve Baisden

Question: Did Jesus die spiritually as well as physically on the cross?

Answer: The quick answer is YES! But we all know more is needed in order to understand how and why this had to happen.

Isa 59:1-2 says that sin separates us from God, Rom 6:23 says the wages of sin is death. It costs you something when you sin, it cost you your life! But what life is it that you must forfeit in order to sin? It is spiritual life! If it were physical life, then babies would never die because they are sinless! If it were physical life, then the moment one became a Christian he would never die provided he remained faithful. No, the life that is lost is spiritual life.

Make no mistake, your soul is eternal but when the Bible speaks of spiritual death it is referring simply to separation from God. Being separated from God means you are lost and "dead" to God. So, when we say you die spiritually, we say it as the Bible describes it "your sins have separated you from God, and the wages of sin is death."

Jesus had to pay the price in order to redeem (buy us back) to God. What was the price? Spiritual death!

If the Bible said the wages of sin is cancer, then I think everyone would agree cancer is what it costs. Jesus would have had to pay with cancer. A tooth ache would not have done it, the flu, leprosy, heart failure or any other physical ailment would NOT pay the price! It would have to be paid for with cancer!

On the cross Jesus cried out "my God my God why hast thou forsaken me" may I ask at this point what causes separation from God? If you answer biblically you must answer SIN! Your sins have separated between you and your God (Isa 59:1-2).

Jesus never sinned, but He bore our sins in His flesh 1Pe 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 1Pe 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

1Pe 2:23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

1Pe 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Jesus was made a curse for us (Gal 3:13)

Jesus was made to be sin for us (2Cor 5:21)

Jesus was made a quickening (back to life) spirit (1Cor 15:45)

He appeared a second time WITHOUT SIN (Heb 9:28)

He bore the sins of many (Heb 9:28)

Since all were dead, Christ died for all (2Cor 5:14) Must be spiritual death!

Jesus died to sin (Rom 6:10)

Even the Old Testament bears witness to this fact: Isa 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Isa 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Yes, make no mistake the price was paid with the soul of our Lord.

Maybe a quick analogy would help we could compare it to a father who has a son that gets into trouble with the law. The penalty, 5,000.00 dollars and the son cannot afford to pay the cost. The father steps in and pays the fine. He bore the cost, he became to payment for that fine. Was he the one that committed the crime, no! But he was the one that paid the price for the crime. How much did Jesus love us, enough to give EVERYTHING He had to redeem us back to the Father! [SB]

If You Are Willing to Accept It

Scott Klaft

Not too long ago, when still holding to a futurist view of scripture, I once designed a lesson dealing with John “the Baptist” – the baptizer, citing him as an example of the brevity of scripture which gives credence to the biblical claim of divine inspiration. I said we know relatively little about John and certainly not as much as we might like to know, being that Jesus holds him up as such an important figure (cf. Luke 7:28). I realize now that was my own ignorance talking.

Scripture has plenty to say about John the baptizer, and it said it long before he was ever born. He was far more important to the coming of Christ than I, personally, ever realized; and, I am not talking about Jesus’ first coming. There is a great deal more to study about John than I will have room enough to discuss here, and I encourage everyone to look into this deeper. There is great benefit in the complete truth about who John was or what his part was in God’s plan.

Mark chapter 1 identifies John as the fulfillment of the prophecies of Malachi 3:1, and Isaiah 40:3-4. Those prophecies are spoken by those prophets in a context. What we are not very often told is that, in the Hebraic style, the New Testament penmen are not *randomly* citing the scripture, or ‘proof-texting’ as so many often do in our modern times. They were importing the whole meaning of the text they were citing.

As both Matthew and Mark apply those prophecies to John, they were intentionally implying that the things spoken of and described *in the contexts* of those prophecies were being fulfilled in the time of John's work. That means we *must* take a closer look at what those prophets were saying if we are to understand who and what John was to God's greater plan.

John was the Messenger, John was the Voice

For practicality and space, the reader is encouraged to stop here, open the Bible, and read Malachi 3:1-6 and Isaiah 40:1-8. Then read the surrounding, immediate contexts, both before and after, as far as it might seem reasonable that the prophets were speaking on the same subject matter.

The Messenger – Malachi 3:1-6

The entire book of Malachi is God pleading with Judah by way of rhetorical Q & A, - a Socratic interview, if you will – and God pronouncing condemnation upon the people for their failure to hear and heed His Word. Please also recall that the verse and chapter breaks are the inventions of men and were not intended by God. Sometimes they occur in inappropriate places. The separation between the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3 is one of those inappropriate breaks.

At the end of chapter 2, God was having a controversy with His people over the injustice of their behavior. Rhetorically, he fills-in their part of the conversation that their behavior had supplied:

“Ye have wearied the LORD with your words.

“Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him?

“When ye say, ‘Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD,’ and ‘he delighteth in them,’ or, ‘Where is the God of judgment?’” (Mal. 2:17)

The Lord's answer and response to their having wearied Him by saying such things by their behavior was the prophecy of 3:1-6 (verse 7 starts another controversy). He was saying that the God of Judgment was coming, and He would send *The Messenger* first to indicate His nearness. The Messenger, John, would prepare the way before the God of Judgment comes to His temple. This is not a reference to Jesus' many visits to the physical temple during His first coming. It is a reference to the second coming in Judgment. John was preparing the way for it by teaching repentance toward God.

Malachi poses a question that would later be referenced in the book of Revelation: “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?” (Mal. 3:2) As the great men, kings, and influential people hid themselves in rocks and mountains and hoped for them to fall, it was the wrath of the Lamb they feared. “For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. 6:17)

Malachi then views the God of Judgment coming “like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver...” (Mal. 3:2, 3) purifying the priests that their sacrifices would be acceptable. This is not the Levitical priests; it is the “priesthood” of the New Testament. But this is nothing new to readers of the New Testament (cf. 1Pet. 1:6-7; 22-24; 2:5, 9). By preaching repentance, John was preparing the Jews for their final judgment. The words of John reflect that very specifically:

“O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy [Spirit], and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:7-12).

Notice all the references to fire and the inescapable judgment language. John was not there, primarily, to herald Jesus' physical incarnation or His cross. He spoke of the Lord purging the people by fire.

Malachi continues, saying that those things would occur when the Lord would be both witness and judge against their injustices; which, in turn, proves His unchanging character. God would in fact avenge the innocent (rewarding them with righteousness). This, too, is nothing new (cf. Deut. 32:35-26, 41-43; Psm. 58:10; Isa. 34:8; 35:4; 61:2; Rom. 12:19ff; 2Thess. 1:6-10; Rev. 6:9-11). John was the harbinger of this message. The time had come for *the kingdom* and *the judgment* to be "at hand" (Matthew 3:2).

The Voice

Matthew, having told us John's words: "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," cites Isaiah 40 like Mark did, making application to John as fulfillment of the prophecy, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Isa. 40:3; cf. Matt. 3:3; Mrk 1:3; Lk 3:4; Jn. 1:23). The Isaiah 40 prophecy was a comforting passage, speaking of the "one" whom the Jews could identify which would signify the nearness of salvation. But that "pardon" for "iniquities" would only come at the time when Jerusalem had received "double for all her sins" (Isa. 40:1).

If you looked up my earlier references, you'll notice that Peter had made reference to Isa. 40 in 1Peter 1:22-24. "All flesh is grass" (Isa. 40:6-8). The glory of Judah, and Jerusalem as its flower, had faded. That comes in the context where Isaiah said, "behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him" (40:10; cf. Isa. 62:11). The blessings and the punishments would be inseparable. John's work was to proclaim that both were arriving with the Lord's coming. Yes, certain blessings were given at Jesus' first coming, but no one could reasonably say He brought judgment or punishment at that time. It was His second coming that brought both simultaneously.

The Elijah that was not Elijah

Responding to the people who thought John was a reincarnation of prophets who were long dead (biologically speaking), John told them he was specifically not Elijah (cf. Jn. 1:21). But Jesus told his disciples that John was specifically the fulfillment of the prophecy that said Elijah would come first (cf. Luke 17:10-12). That prophecy is found in Malachi 4:5-6. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet ¶Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (v. 5), which included reconciling fathers and children to avoid the curses (see v. 6).

Again, we see John (after the similitude of Elijah) was the harbinger, not only of the blessings (v.6), but of "the day of the LORD" which would be both "great" and "dreadful." Joel uses the words "great and terrible" (Joel. 2:11, 34) in reference to the Day of the Lord. There are several different references to the "day of the Lord" in scripture, but they all refer to a day of *judgment and blessing* as the result of a visitation of the Lord who rewards what He finds. John was the fulfillment of the prophecy, and therefore his work was the sign of judgment and blessing being "at hand." The time had come for *both* and for the Jewish people to have a choice by responding to John's preaching to determine which.

The coming of the voice, the messenger, Elijah, initiated the end-goal of the law and prophets (cf. Rom. 10:4; 1Cor. 10:11). "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matt. 11:13-15). Both the prophecies about John, *and* the inspired words of John, himself, foretold of the time of the *judgment and the kingdom*. Therefore, the law and prophets could not have been taken away at the cross of Jesus, as the judgment and the kingdom had not yet been fulfilled (see also Matthew 5:18).

Those who view the coming of Christ in judgment has yet to occur in the future would have us believe the coming of the kingdom was a separate event. They have the harbinger of judgment and the kingdom proclaiming a judgment that does not come. They would have the kingdom come without its king. They would have the judgment of the Jews be a coming without actually being a coming. They expect yet a

third coming in the judgment of the world in a time-ending, universe destroying event; of which, neither law, nor prophets, nor the harbinger of judgment and kingdom, or its King, ever spoke.

The coming of John was monumental in the initiation of the events of the following forty years. There is much more about John that could be said, but I am out of space. I hope this scratching of the surface prompts you to study who John the baptizer really was and what the implications of His work means to you and me today. [SK]

The Judgement (Which Was at Hand)

Holger W. Neubauer

The prophet warned, “For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not give her light to shine. I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity, and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold: even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.” The judgment language utilized by the prophet is graphic and forceful. At first glance it appears that the Bible writer is predicting the dissolution of the planet as he says, “the earth shall remove out of her place.” But, upon careful inspection of the passage we find that the prophet intended no such meaning. These verses are taken from Isaiah 13:10- 13. Isaiah was addressing the impending doom upon ancient Babylon. Isaiah 13:1 records the “burden of Babylon.” The coming judgment was near, as Isaiah warned, “the day is at hand” (Isaiah 13:6). The context tells us that the end of Babylon would come by the hand of the “Medes” (Isaiah 13:17). The prophet Daniel also attested that the ruling empire after Babylon would be “Media and Persia” (Daniel 8:20). History confirms that Babylon fell in 539 B.C. But how was the sun darkened and what does it mean that the stars would no longer shine? How then, did the “earth” remove out of her place? Isaiah was simply using typical Jewish symbols that represent a nation ready to fall. The reader will recall how Joseph dreamed that the Sun, Moon and stars would bow before him which referenced his father, mother and brothers and not physical heavenly bodies (Genesis 37:9). His father Jacob, his mother Rachel and his brothers were the federal heads of Israel. Subsequent generations would identify themselves by the names of these twelve brothers. The twelve brothers from which the twelve tribes received their names were the stars of Israel. When a nation was to be judged, their stars would fall. Their authorities (the stars) and their subjects (the earth) would be punished and life as they knew it would come to an end, as their culture, economy and religious life would all come to a grinding halt. Today, when we hear the terms “heaven and earth” we think clouds and dirt. In Hebrew apocalyptic language, the prophets meant authorities and subjects. In Isaiah 51:15,16, the prophet spoke of how God took Israel out of Egypt when “he divided the sea” in order to “plant the heavens and earth and say unto Zion, thou art my people.” The heavens and earth are figures which refer to the nation of Israel.

The scriptures are Jewish. The Hebraic symbolism may seem extravagant to our minds which are bathed in Western thought and culture, but to the Eastern mind, one fluent in the metaphors and symbols of Jewish teaching, these salient symbols point to the underlying spiritual reality that God himself was the author of these judgments that would bring these nations to an end. What seems unnatural to us was part of ordinary speech patterns for the prophets. These symbols of national judgment warned the readers of awful and sure retribution. The nature of the judgments could not however, take precedence over the time of the judgments. God's own credibility would be at stake. Therefore, the time element trumps the language. It was true when judgment came upon the Babylonians by the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. It was also true when Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. The “at hand” statement in Isaiah 13:6 is the benchmark to work from. Their Judgment was near as Isaiah penned the message. The judgment would be within reach or within the generation the Babylonians were living in then. When we turn to the New Testament we find the same language of judgment. Jesus predicted the sun would be “darkened” and the

moon “shall not give her light” (Matthew 24:29). Jesus affirmed that “this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled” (Matthew 24:34). Even the traditionalists would agree with us to this point. When Jesus said, “this generation” (Matthew 24:34) he spoke of the generation and age he was living in then. Jesus warned that no one would know that “day” or “hour” (Matthew 24:36) so all would have to watch. Jesus was quoting Zechariah 14:7 which prophesied a day known only to the Lord. That is exactly why Jesus cites Noah in Matthew 24:37-39. Jesus transitions not to another coming and to another judgment but to the unbelievers who would reject the warning signs. It was the unbelievers that would reject the signs not the believers. Jesus used the same illustration in Luke 17:26-28 which clearly refers to Jesus' coming in Jerusalem. Just as Noah built an ark and the unbelievers rejected the signs, so when Jesus came in Jerusalem the unbelievers would likewise reject the signs. Jesus was coming as a thief (Matthew 24:43) not to the believers but to the unbelievers. In Revelation 16:15 Jesus said, “Behold I come as a thief.” Yet, that coming was “at hand” in John's day (Revelation 22:10). The book of Revelation was filled with signs.

Just as Matthew 24 cannot be divided without doing violence to the text and destroying the symmetry of Jesus teaching the same subject in Luke 17, so Matthew 25 and the judgment scene in which the nations would be gathered for judgment and be separated with the sheep and the goats cannot be taken away from its first century context (25:32). The Judgment of Matthew 25 is the same kind of Judgment that began in Acts 2 as the church began. Those being added to the church were being separated from those that rejected it by means of the gospel, the vehicle of God's judgment. John 3:36 says, “and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” What is God's wrath but judgment? His Judgment was being carried out through His word. The reader will remember that the faithful were told, “thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things” (Matthew 25:21). This is the same language of Revelation 2:25-27 in which John spoke to the church at Thyatira, “But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron.” Jesus told this church, “hold fast till I come.” Again, that message was “at hand” when John wrote (Revelation 1:3). The rule was spiritual as Jeremiah was told, “Behold I have put my word in thy mouth. See I have put thee over the nations” (Jeremiah 1:9,10). We are ruling today through spiritual truth and we are blessed with blessings commensurate with that old world which was transitioning then. Jesus taught that those who would, “break one of these least commandments and teach men so shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.” Those however who would be called great would, “do and teach them” (Matthew 5:19). Jesus promised opportunities (the talents) be given those that were the most faithful. Today consistency in service is where greatness is achieved.

The Judgment was “at hand” in Peter's day. Peter speaks in the most forward and clear terms, “Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For this cause was the gospel preached to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer” (1 Peter 4:5-7). Peter's “at hand” statement is in the midst of this judgment language. Incidentally, Guy Woods took the position in his commentary of 1 Peter, that Peter here referred to the “fearful destruction soon to fall upon Jerusalem.” In 1 Peter 4:17 we have recorded, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God, and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” The original has an article before the word “judgment.” Literally, Peter says, “For the time is come that THE JUDGMENT must begin at the house of God.” The Judgment had come to the church in the first century. The judgment that had begun with the church would soon be meted out on the whole world. The whole world would soon be judged. The same theme is followed by James, “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not against another, brethren lest ye be condemned: behold the Judge standeth at the door” (James 5:8,9). The Great Judge was standing at the door then, mirroring Jesus words in Matthew 24:33 which says, “So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.” James affirmed the “coming of the Lord draweth nigh,” which is the same Greek phrase often translated “at hand” in

Matthew 3:2 and 4:17. The judgment that began with the church would soon judge the whole world as the message of the gospel was being preached in all the world (Matthew 28:18-20). God's justice was at work. God would not judge the world until the whole world would have access to the gospel. The church would have the completed word before the whole world so that is why the judgment had already begun with the church. As the gospel became available to the nations the nations would be judged. The Judgment would culminate in the day in which every soul, both Jew and Gentile, would come under the auspices of the gospel. When Jerusalem fell, the whole world became amenable to the gospel, because gospel had been preached in all the world. This is why Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then the end shall come" (Matthew 24:14). The end of the Jewish age could not end before the gospel was preached to all nations. Again, God would not judge the whole world before the whole world heard the gospel. The task of preaching the gospel to the inhabited world was accomplished in the first century (Colossians 1:6; 1:23).

God did not judge the world with the gospel before the details of the gospel were revealed. The traditional position has God judging the world with the New Covenant before the New Covenant was written and read! Those Jews who died before hearing the gospel would be judged by the Law of Moses. The Gentiles who died before hearing the gospel would be judged without the law or in Patriarchy. This is precisely the meaning of Romans 2:9-12, "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is not respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall perish without law; and many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Romans 2:9,10). Because the Jews heard the word first they were judged first but were also the first to be saved. This point is corroborated in Revelation 7:1-8, in which the Jews or 144,000 had to be sealed and then the Gentiles or the great multitude (7:9) would be sealed in order for God to bring judgment on all the world. The traditional position has God condemning to Hell thousands before even having access to the gospel. Today, of course the gospel is available to all men. The gospel wasn't available to the Gentiles of the first century until it was revealed to Cornelius and his household that they should be baptized (Acts 10:47; 11:18). Peter would not have concluded the Gentiles could be saved without the revelation that the diet laws had changed (Acts 10:14-16). The previous unclean food became clean, just as the previous unclean nation could become acceptable to God through the gospel. Peter was given the command to "kill and eat" 10-12 years after Pentecost. Hebrews 8:13, says, "a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." The Jewish Christians were beginning to see that their age was coming to an end. Yet, the Jewish age could not end before the gospel was preached to all nations. Jesus tied the end of the Jewish age to preaching the gospel to all nations (Matthew 24:14). The task of preaching the gospel to the inhabited world was accomplished in the first century (Colossians 1:6; 1:23). This truth signaled that the end was near.

The coming of Christ, the judgment and end of the world are all synchronous events. They were destined to take place at the same time. With the judgment, Isaiah's language would come to pass which affirmed, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Isaiah 45:23). These words are repeated in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 5:10, Philippians 2:11, Romans 14:10-12). Yet, how were these words fulfilled? Notice Paul's statement in Ephesians 3:14 which says, "For this cause I bow my knees unto God the Father or our Lord Jesus Christ." Isaiah's message was kingdom language and written to kingdom people. The apostle Paul was fulfilling Isaiah's words. Paul was bowing his knee! Bowing the knee wasn't a reference to a literal bending of the knee joint, but a willing submission to God's authority. Paul's tongue was confessing the Lord as he wrote those words by living and proclaiming the gospel. Paul was a Jew, but the will of God was that both Jew and Gentile would bow the knee to the Lord. Both Jew and Gentile did this very thing in the kingdom of God. Those who would not bow the knee would be judged. Let us hear the Baptist's words again, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). It was this same John who affirmed, "the axe is laid unto the root" and "Whose fan is in his hand" (Matthew 3:10,12). This was

judgment language that depicted the judgment of Old Covenant Israel. The judgment had begun! Jesus said, "I am come to send fire upon the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled." The judgment was already kindled which would ultimately bring judgment upon the whole world through one gospel. God brought the Judgment incrementally until the whole world stood before the Judgment seat of Christ and was judged through his word.

The Judgment included not only the living but also the dead. The quick and the dead were to be judged at Jesus' appearing and kingdom (2 Timothy 4:1). This is completion of the kingdom that Jesus cited in Luke 21:31 when he said, "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." With the physical judgment of Jerusalem, a far greater spiritual judgment and reality was taking place. The fall of Jerusalem announced that the Hadean world was judged and the righteous saints could now enter into the presence of God. Jesus was promised to come with the keys to death and Hades (Revelation 1:18). As Jerusalem fell the Hadean world was judged. Revelation 11:1-19 plays out the entire scenario. The temple is measured (11:1,2), the great city is identified as the place where Jesus was crucified which is unmistakably Jerusalem (11:8), the two witnesses are allowed to ascend to heaven (11:12), the seventh trump sounds which is the last trump (11:15) and the dead are judged and reward is given to the righteous dead (11:18,19). This is the same Judgment which was "at hand" in 1 Peter 4:5-7. John affirmed that the events in the Revelation were "at hand" as well (Revelation 1:3, 22:10). The same language that Isaiah utilized in the fall of Babylon is used by John to refer to Jerusalem falling in the Revelation. Revelation 6 speaks of the sun becoming black and the moon turning to blood. Revelation 8 uses the same imagery as a star falls from heaven and a third of the sun was smitten. These are references to ruling authorities, not our physical sun that lights our solar system. The entirety of the book of Revelation had a first century audience with a first century application. The Revelation begins with an "at hand" statement and ends with an "at hand" statement (Revelation 1:3; 22:10). Jesus promised to come "quickly" to those first century readers (Revelation 22:12). Jesus came and the world was judged just as he promised (Matthew 16:27,28). Let us not think that Western thought of the 21st century should take center stage over all the generations before us, when the prophets were not Western at all. Let us humble ourselves and allow God to tell us what these turgid symbols mean by His own word. Let us turn again to the prophets for understanding and let us put more time and effort in finding the meaning of scripture by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13). [HN]