

“The Prolepsis”

“And calleth those things which be not as though they were”

Holger Neubauer

The above quote is taken from Romans 4:17 and has particular reference to the Lord’s promise to Abraham. The text says, “As it is written, I have made thee a father to many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were:” Paul quotes here from Genesis 17:5 and points to the time that Abram’s name was changed to Abraham, as God said, “for a father of many nations have I made thee.” Yet, at the time God made this statement to Abraham, Abraham had no children. How could God call Abraham the father of many nations before the birth of Isaac and especially before the Jewish nation? The answer is that God “calleth those things which be not as though they were.” When God sees an event in the future it is as if that event had already occurred because when God makes a promise the results are inevitable. God had already called Abraham out of the land of Ur of the Chaldees and promised to him “I will make of thee a great nation” (Genesis 12:2). The results of the promise to Abraham were already being accomplished by God’s foreknowledge and power. This is an example of what is called a prolepsis, or an “already, but not yet” statement in scripture. The prison terminology of “a dead man walking” refers to the inevitable results of a man on death row. This statement is a prolepsis or an “already, but not yet” statement. This same literary device is found throughout scripture.

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Salvation in the New Testament is itself revealed as a prolepsis. Jesus said, “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Yet, later Paul stated that our “salvation is nearer than when we believed” (Romans 13:10). The nature of salvation is the same in both texts; the spiritual salvation which saves the soul. Peter spoke to early Christians who were already in the process of receiving salvation when he wrote, “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:9). The soul saving mission was accomplished by Jesus through his cross but not at the cross. Was the world saved at the cross? Was the world reconciled to Christ at the very second Jesus died on the cross? Of course, not. Jesus had not even yet been raised until three days later, which must be believed in order to secure salvation (Romans 10:9,10). Therefore, the cross became the means of salvation but did not identify the time of salvation. Salvation was not accomplished at the cross but by means of the cross. This point is made abundantly clear in Ephesians 2:16 which says, “And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross.” The Gentiles were not reconciled to God until 10-12 years after Pentecost when Cornelius obeyed the gospel (Acts 10:47). Therefore, the reconciliation of both Jew and Gentile took place by means of the cross but not at the cross. The time of salvation is however clearly posited at the return of Christ, for he would appear a “second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28). The salvation that Jesus came to offer was initiated by the cross but not consummated until his return, just as the High Priest had to first offer his blood and return to the people to pronounce the blessing (Leviticus 9:20-22). It is clear, Jesus would deliver complete salvation at his second and final coming.

Paul stated that by “grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8,9). Yet, Peter also said that the early Christians were “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). Peter said a few verses later, “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:9). Peter then posits grace, faith and their final salvation be given upon the return

of Christ as he said, “and hope to the end for the grace that is brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13). The nature of the salvation that was in their future was no different than the one they were experiencing through Christ. The grace and faith of Ephesians 2:8,9 was no different than the grace and faith of Jesus' return. The salvation based on grace through faith was proleptic in nature. It is another instance of the already and not yet of scripture. God is talking about things that were not as though they were. The subject of salvation was of a spiritual nature and had to do with forgiveness of sins so that one could stand in the presence of God.

When Jesus said, “he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:25) obviously, he was speaking of spiritual and not physical death. This would be accomplished upon Jesus' return for the “last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26). Since Peter remarked that the early Christian's hope was the “salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:9), how is it that the death that Jesus came to deal with in 1 Corinthians was physical in nature? When did physical death become an enemy for a Christian? In 2 Timothy 1:10 we find these poignant words, “who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Certainly, this abolishment of death was accomplished by the cross, but not at the cross. The result of sin is spiritual death and it was this death that was destroyed upon the second coming of Christ so that all IN CHRIST could live. Consider once again, Hebrews 9:28, “he shall appear a second time without sin unto salvation.” If the salvation of Jesus' coming is spiritual in nature, which is proven by Peter's statement of the “salvation of your souls,” then how could the death that Jesus came to destroy be anything but spiritual in nature? When Paul affirmed, “but when the commandment came sin revived and I died” he was speaking about spiritual and not physical death (Romans 7:9). Spiritual death which is separation from God is the consequence of sin, “for the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). If sin brings spiritual death, then what would the restoration of that death be called? It would most certainly be identified as life and resurrection!

New Testament baptism identifies us with Jesus' own resurrection in order that we “would walk in newness in life” (Romans 6:4). In baptism, our “old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed” (Romans 6:6). Our physical bodies are not destroyed at baptism but most assuredly a body is destroyed. It is the body that dies when it sins, the spiritual body or soul which Jesus wills to save. It is this spiritual body that is the focus of Jesus' salvation, not our physical bodies. The very text we began with says, “who quickeneth the dead” (Romans 4:17). The raising of the dead began in Jesus' own day as he said, “the hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25). Jesus was speaking of the spiritual dead, for he said, “the hour is coming now is.” Jesus was speaking about spiritual life and Jesus did not speak of a different nature of resurrection a few verses later, but simply spoke of different class of individuals two whom life would be given; those dead in the graves! Those in Hades had not gone out of existence! But they needed to be brought to God's presence so that they might have life! It was not a different nature of resurrection that Jesus spoke about in John 5:28,29, He simply completed the proleptic discussion of resurrection life. Read carefully the words of Jesus, “all in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28,29). Those in the graves were in Hades as the righteous would be brought to the presence of God and the wicked would have their judgment. When? Upon the return of Christ, and at the gathering. 2 Thessalonians 2:1, speaks of “the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto him.” But when did the gathering take place? Listen to Jesus words with an open mind and honest heart, “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, for one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31). Even our opponents agree that Jesus' statement in this passage is a reference to the coming of Christ in Jerusalem, they just have no way of explaining it. Rusty Stark, futurist, and preacher who engineered a vote in the Benton Harbor church's business meeting to never debate eschatology in their building, labels me as a false teacher, but when I asked him about this verse he responded, “that was the beginning of the gathering.” This is nothing but desperation. What possible gathering began at Jerusalem's fall? Jesus was speaking of the “end” in Matthew 24, not the beginning (Matthew 24:13,14). The gathering began at Pentecost (Ephesians 1:10) and was consummated at Jerusalem's fall. Jesus said, “the Son of man

shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather together out of his kingdom all things that offend” (Matthew 13:41). Jesus promised the gathering would take place at the end of the “world” (Matthew 13:39). The KJV translates the Greek word "aion" as world but the NKJV more accurately translates “aion” as age. Jesus was living in the Jewish age and speaking about the end of his age, not of some distant age! Jesus quoted from Daniel 12:2 in John 5:28,29 and Daniel clearly prophesied about the end of the Jewish age (Daniel 12:11) when referencing the “end.” The gathering was also proleptic in that what was taking place was not yet fully accomplished until the gathering at the end of the age (Mt 24:31).

One of the clearest references to the proleptic nature of salvation in the New Testament is found in the subject of redemption. According to Vines the word means “especially of purchasing a slave with a view to his freedom.” Something has been lost and sold, and then something is found and bought back. Redemption is the story of God's plan in bringing forth his people back to relationship with Him. Ephesians 1:7 says, “In whom we have redemption.” Yet, Ephesians 1:13,14 the Holy Spirit is given as a seal “until the redemption of the purchased possession.” Just what is the purchased possession? The futurist will have to say the physical body, which is contrary to reason and the obvious truth that the purchased possession can be nothing but the church (Acts 20:28). Romans 8:23 speaks of, “waiting for the adoption to wit, the redemption of our body.” Paul cannot have the physical body in mind because the physical body was never lost. Paul is not referring to the restoration of waist-lines and hair-lines. Our “adoption” has to do with relationship with God not physical perfection likened to the Greek gods of old. The previous verse speaks of the “whole creation groaneth and travaileth unto now” (Romans 8:22). Are the mosquitos yearning for salvation? Are the slugs and the bugs waiting for the “adoption?” The creation is the spiritual creation of God that was yearning for restoration of relationship offered at the coming of Christ. The redemption was proleptic in nature. The early church possessed grace but grace was about to be revealed (Ephesians 2:8,9; 1 Peter 1:9). They were saved but salvation was coming (Romans 5:1; 1 Peter 1:13). The early Christians were dead to the law but the law was dying (Colossians 2:14-16; Hebrews 8:13). These early Christians were redeemed, yet their redemption was coming. The day of redemption would take place when Jerusalem fell, for Jesus said, “And when these things come to pass, then look up, and your REDEMPTION draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28). When Jerusalem fell, the graves were opened and Hades was destroyed (Revelation 1:18; 10:7). The long wait for salvation finally came (1 Peter 1:10-13). Heaven was opened (Revelation 11:17-19, Revelation 14:13; 15:8). The proleptic discussion of salvation means today that Hades is no longer the place where saints go when they die. We no longer go to a place where the OT saints had to go. Today Heaven is opened for the saints, the gathering of Hades is in our past and that my brothers is good news! Through Christ we no longer have to wait as did those before Christ coming. Just as Jesus promised it would take place in that generation (Mt 12:41-41).

AD 70: Shadow or Reality?

Guest Article

When confronted with the facts of realized eschatology, one popular response is “Well, AD 70 is unquestionably important, but it is just a shadow of the second coming.” One important thing that needs to be pointed out, however, is that if the Lord really did return in AD 70 to take vengeance on the ‘children of the kingdom’ in any **w**ay, then that would be the second *παρουσία* (*parousia* or “coming”) of Christ. After all, that is the word Jesus uses in Matthew 24:27 to describe an event that was to happen within His generation (v. 34). “*For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be*” (Matthew 24:27). In every instance that the word is used in connection with Jesus it is in reference to a (in the original audience’s eyes) future advent. *Παρουσία* is never used to describe the sending of the Holy Spirit, the initiation of the kingdom, or His physical incarnation. So, if we are honest with ourselves in observing the grammar of the text, Jesus’ **second** *παρουσία* took place within His generation. One major flaw in any futurist eschatology is the fact that there would have to be a **THIRD** coming of Jesus in order to have a yet future coming. Therefore,

Jerusalem cannot be a type of Jesus second coming, it is the second coming. The shadow of the Old Testament is revealed in the reality of Jesus testimony of the perfected kingdom (Lk 21:24-32).

What Makes the Fall of Jerusalem so Important?

One preacher for the church, Franklin Camp, understood the significance of the fall of Jerusalem to an extent. Though we do not agree with his conclusion that it was simply a picture of the, still future, final judgment, some of his remarks in his book *The Work of the Holy Spirit in Redemption* are worth noting (pages 43-76). Brother Camp says that the Destruction of Jerusalem answers the question “what think ye of Christ,” serves as proof of the inspiration of the New Testament, closed the question of the Messiah, argued for Jesus’ coronation, held great political significance, separated Judaism from the church, settled the question of the sons of God, answers the question of the promise to Abraham, and marked the end of the miraculous age. Brother Camp also gives a great defense for the early date of Revelation (pp. 58-61). However, my Brother makes the mistake of stating that the Destruction of Jerusalem was just a picture of the final Judgment and the end of the physical world. This is emphasized by his statement regarding Max King (one of the first in the 1900s, but certainly not in history, to teach a form of Realized Eschatology): “Brother Max King would have difficulty showing how the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were included in the judgment upon the Jewish Nation when Jerusalem fell” (p. 81). We will attempt to show through some of Brother Camp’s own study - that many deem to be one of the best works on the Holy Spirit, if not the best - that, played to its logical end, the fall of Jerusalem wasn’t simply a shadow, but was the actual “end” prophesied about and looked to by the Old Testament and New Testament saints. *“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come”* (Acts 26:22).

First, Brother Camp’s work in showing that Revelation is exclusively concerning the Destruction of Jerusalem is one that I can whole-headedly agree with, and it is coincidentally the answer to the argument given in the preceding paragraph (viz. difficulty in including Sodom and Gomorrah in the Destruction of Jerusalem; see point 5 below). Those who take a preterist view on Revelation must admit the following:

1. The marriage of the Son of God and the church has taken place (Rev 19:7; see also Mat 22:1-14).
2. The marriage supper of the Lamb has already begun (Rev 19:9; see also Luke 16:15-24).
3. Satan has been defeated (Revelation 20:10; see also Rom 16:20, Gen 3:15).
4. The great white throne judgment has occurred (Rev 20:11-12; see also Mat 25:31-46)
5. The resurrection (i.e. the emptying of the Hadean realm) has occurred (Revelation 20:13-14; see also Daniel 12:2, 7, 13) .
6. The defeat of death for those “written in the book” has occurred (Revelation 20:14-15; see also I Corinthians 15:54-57).
7. The New Heaven and Earth have been established (Revelation 21:1; see also, Hebrews 12:26-29, II Corinthians 5:17, and II Peter 3:1-18).

There will be some, however, who object to the early date of Revelation on account of Irenaeus. To that we do not have the space to answer in this article, but a personal study of the similarities between the Olivet Discourse and Revelation should suffice (e.g. notice the correlation between the opening of the first six seals and the signs given in Matthew 24 concerning the fall of Jerusalem).

Secondly, Brother Camp put forth that the Destruction of Jerusalem answers the question of the promise to Abraham. Again, I would agree, but I would also urge that it didn’t simply answer the question, but it was the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham and it would be the time that Abraham would receive his inheritance: the heavenly country (Hebrews 11:16). In order to better understand how this could be possible, we must first undergo a miniature study of “perfection” in the book of Hebrews.

1. Hebrews 5:9 – Jesus’ being “made perfect” is in reference to Him becoming the author of our eternal salvation. Paul said in Romans 6:17 that he was thankful that those at Rome “obeyed ... that form of doctrine.” The “form of doctrine” is the gospel which is the “power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16; I Corinthians 15:1-4). Therefore, Jesus being “made” perfect is the completion of the gospel (i.e. the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ).
2. Hebrews 9:9 – The Old Covenant sacrifices (and priesthood – 7:11) could not make those that were under such a system “perfect.”
3. Hebrews 11:39-40 – The receiving of “the promise” is equated to being “made perfect.” The promise is the “heavenly country/city” in Hebrews 11:16. However, the thing that Abraham, and the other martyrs in Hebrews 11, was searching for was a “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35). Therefore, just like Jesus, the Old Testament righteous would be made perfect through resurrection, but this resurrection is the receiving of the promise, the perfection of the saints, and the entering into the heavenly country/ city (Acts 2:31 and John 20:17). It is also important to note that the Christians would be perfected (allowed to enter the Heavenly City) at the same time as the Old Testament saints. This is no different from what Paul said in I Thessalonians 4:15.
4. Hebrews 12:22-29 – The Hebrews writer shows here that Christians had arrived at the heavenly Jerusalem and to “just men made perfect” (see Philippians 3:10-12). These are the “just men” of Hebrews 11 who had been made perfect by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:14). The just men, however, would have to wait alongside the Christians who had “redemption through His blood” for the “redemption of the purchased possession” at the “Day of Redemption” (Ephesians 1:7, 13-14; 4:30; see also Hebrews 13:14).

This brings our attention to Daniel 12:13. “But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days” (Daniel 12:13). Daniel would receive his inheritance at the “end of the days” (his inheritance is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham and he couldn’t receive that apart from the other saints). The end of the days, however, would be at the abomination of desolation when the power of the holy people was completely shattered (Daniel 12:2, 7, 11; see also Matthew 24:15)! This is also the eschatological “time of the end” and the time of the resurrection (verses 1-4; see I Corinthians 15:24). But notice carefully verse 7!! “...all these things shall be finished.” Daniel didn’t say that these things would be started, but finished. If that is the case, then they do not foreshadow anything in our future. All of the blessings that were secured at the second *παρουσία* in AD 70 are free to us (those “in Christ” – Ephesians 1:3) now without any restrictions. “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (7) That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6-7).

Have You Heard?

Steve Baisden

One of the greatest hindrances to honest dialogue can be based upon what we have heard regarding others. Have you heard that someone is now a heretic, he has accepted Mac Deaver doctrine? Did you hear, that preacher is now a student of Bales false doctrine of marriage divorce and remarriage? Or he is now into Kingism. Sometimes it is just, "I have heard you are a false teacher." I have lost many an opportunity to talk with people because they have simply heard these types of accusations thrown around. And what a shame! This is also known as "Poisoning the Well" causing people to form opinions before they even hear the reasons why.

As a member in the Lords church I have heard the term "Kingism" or "Max king Doctrine" many times. I had heard it was a terrible and soul-condemning thing. I had heard that is was an awful, heretical, false doctrine that would immediately send my soul straight to hell. I was scared to death of this evil doctrine and those who may have been caught up in that terrible doctrine! I did not know exactly what it was, I did not know what he taught, I did not know exactly why he was wrong, but I KNEW Max King was a false

teacher because I had heard it for so long, I heard it so many times, I heard it so vehemently that it just must be true. In fact, Max King doctrine was far scarier to me than Baptist Doctrine or Jehovah Witness doctrine. I understood what those organizations believe and I could easily show their error. But Kingism... it was a mystical doctrine that I really knew nothing of. In fact I never encountered anyone that said they were a "Kingite," NEVER! I never encountered anyone that said they believed King was wrongly accused; NEVER! I never really had to look into the details of "Kingism," so I didn't.

Before we go any farther in this article let me say loud and clear that I am not a Kingite. I am not a follower of Max King doctrine and I am not defending him! I believe what the Bible teaches and I have faith in the word of God. I know above anything else that the Bible is true and cannot be wrong and that is what I will defend! I never heard a King lesson, I never read King's material, I never read his debates, but I did come to SOME of the same conclusions that he did without ever hearing what he said about those things. You could only imagine how shocked I was when someone told me I was a Kingite!

Let's look in a mirror; how often have you heard that the church of Christ is nothing but "Campbellism" or "Campbellites"? Because of this false labeling many people will not even speak with us about scripture because of the label that has been placed upon us. Don't you wish that people would just sit down with us to see what the Bible says without labeling us? Isn't it true that given proper opportunity of honest investigation we could prove that we are not Campbellites, that we are just Christians who have been falsely labeled? Certainly, that is the case.

BUT, in many cases, we turn right around and do the same thing to our own brethren, and wrongly label them. Do the terms "Anti" "Conservative" and "Liberal" ring any bells? I used to always consider myself a conservative. In fact I was proud to announce it to the world. That is until one day I proudly announced my label of being a conservative to a preacher who questioned me about it. This preacher, I thought to be just as "conservative" and maybe more so than myself, I thought would appreciate my position. To my surprise, he said; "instead of trying to wear a label, should we not just try to be faithful? Should we not be "liberal" as much as possible in many regards like in love, patience, and in our giving?" WOW! Yes, I learned a lesson that day and that lesson has never left me. I will no longer label myself as being anything other than a how the scripture designates. No longer would I do that to others!

I am not a "Church of Christ," I am not a "Water Dog," I am not a "Campbellite"! I am a member of the church of Christ, I am a Christian, I am a faithful member in the body of Christ. Should not this be our response to any man that asks us about our hope? We have been indoctrinated into using titles and labels that do not even exist in scripture! In like manner, I am not a Kingite or into Kingism. Just as we collectively wish others would not wrongly label us as Campbellites we should not wrongly label each other.

Just as we would love the opportunity to sit down and explain our position to those who call us Campbellites, I would also love the opportunity to sit down and discuss my position to those who have falsely labeled me. Let's just listen to what the Bible says, and let's let that settle the matter!

It is true that the Bible uses Labels, but it must be noted that it uses those labels as those who were labeled used it to themselves! For example, "The Pharisees" is a label used often in scripture. But this is the name and Label that those who were such used toward themselves. Paul said (Act 26:5) "Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." The Pharisees were proud of this label and they accepted it as who they were! Just like the Catholics, Baptists, and Jehovah Witnesses do today! They are ready and eager to tell others that they are these things!

BUT, what about those who denounce the label or the name that has wrongly been attached to them? Just as members of the church of Christ denounce the name "Campbellite," I, too, denounce the name "Kingite" and any other false labeling! I am a Christian and I stand solely on the word of God having faith therein. My claim is to Christ and NO other! Oh, if only my brethren were not so hypocritical. If only they

would practice what they preach. If only they would extend the courtesy to others which they demand be applied to themselves.

Do we not demand that the denominations face up to us honestly so we can discuss our differences? So, we can explain the difference between "Campbellism" and true Christianity. But then we turn around and do to others what they have done to us by falsely labeling our own brethren and then refusing to discuss the differences because of the label someone has given them. Whatever happened to the "golden rule" (Mat 7:12) "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

Before we just accept what we have heard regarding others, should we not be willing to honestly investigate the accusations? In fact, if we label people as Kingites because they believe the Lord would come in the judgment and resurrection with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, then we would also have to label Jesus as a kingite because that is exactly what He said! He would come in that generation, in the clouds, with the trumpet of God, with the Angels, to judge the world, when Jerusalem would be destroyed, in that generation (Mt 24)? Poor Jesus, must have been a kingite. What have you heard lately? [SB]

Want to Move Mountains?

Steve Baisden

The most important aspect of understanding the Bible is to first understand the words that are used in the Bible. Even before context can be determined one must first have an understanding of the words. Immediately, when something like this is said people start to imagine all those big uncommon words that they do not understand: "sanctification," "emulation," "mammon," etc. In this article, I will be dealing with words that are commonly misunderstood. Everyone knows that if words are misunderstood, the meaning is changed.

The Bible is not from man for, "all scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2Tim 3:16). The Bible is the revelation of the expressed will of God to man cf 2 Pet 1:19-21. The prophet Jeremiah would say: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer 10:23). When we truly grasp this concept, it becomes clear that God gives us all that we need to be saved within the Bible. We cannot get answers regarding salvation from any other source; that is, if, we want to have the correct answer. God is a Spirit, His ways are higher than our ways, His thoughts higher than our thoughts, therefore we must appeal to Him for the answers (Jn 4:24, Isa 55:9).

Throughout scripture we find that God never leaves us without the definition for the words He uses. For example, in Gen 1:5 He tells us what a day is. This is true no matter what subject or word we are looking at. If it is in the Bible, God will clarify its meaning. Baptism is a prime example of this very concept. Ask a Catholic what Baptism is and you might hear that Baptism is a sprinkling or pouring. Pentecostals may say Baptism is spiritual. Baptist may say Baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace. Even Webster's dictionary gives us a definition from a present-day concept or practice and not from what the Bible says. Webster says, "A Christian ceremony in which a small amount of water is placed on a person's head..." all the while the Bible has something very different to say about Baptism. The Bible says it is a burial (Col 2:12). It saves us (1Pet 3:21). It is for the remission of sins (Acts 22:16). It is the process by which one is added to the body of Christ (Acts 2:41,47, Gal 3:27). You can readily see how very important it is that we get the proper definition of Bible words!

The average person would be utterly shocked to see how God defines some words. An excellent example is when Joseph dreamed that the "sun, the moon, and eleven stars," bowed to him (Gen 37). When Joseph told this dream to his brothers and their father Jacob, they became mad at him. When Jacob heard the dream, "the sun, moon, and stars, would bow" to Joseph, Jacob in his anger said "...Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" (Gen 37:10). Typically, when we think

of the sun, moon, and stars, we think of the physical solar system. But Jacob took these words as something totally different; he took it as pertaining to his own family, Joseph's father, mother, and brothers. Let's consider this for just a moment. Why would Jacob interpret it as he did? Is it possible that the physical sun, moon, and stars, could bow to a man? Certainly not! Common sense and reasoning told Jacob that Joseph's dream could not be taken literally, and must mean something other than those literal celestial bodies bowing to him.

This example serves us well. It shows how God expects us to use those same words in the same way that Jacob did when context demands it. The words sun, moon, and stars, are often used metaphorically representing those who had authority over others. In Isa 13-14, we find God telling Babylon that He was going to destroy them. Then look at what He says would happen at Babylon's destruction: "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 cause her light to shine" (Isa 13:10). Is the sun still shining, is the moon still shining, have the constellations stopped giving their light? Certainly not! Just as with Joseph and Jacob, God is using these words metaphorically. The King (sun), the prince (moon), the heirs to the throne (stars), would cease to be. Babylon would be destroyed! This type of language is used throughout scripture, in both Old and New Testaments.

Jesus used this same metaphor in His discourse of the end, when Jerusalem would be destroyed. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:" (Mt 24:14, 29). Jesus is not saying that the literal physical sun, moon, and stars, would stop illumination, but He is saying, Moses, the Prophets, and the Priests of Old would cease to be the ruling authority. Old Covenant Israel's light was about to be extinguished. Jesus would use the words, "Heaven and Earth" in like metaphorical manner meaning the Old Covenant world, not the literal, physical "heavens and earth"!

I used to always wonder about Mat 17:20, where Jesus said, "... for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove." When I was a little boy, I used to envision one day telling a literal mountain to be moved. What a glorious but ill-informed thought! As I studied my Bible I found that the word mountain can be used in a very different sense, metaphorically. One of the most well-known passages that should make it clear is (Isa 2:2), "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the "mountain" of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains,..." Every preacher I know will tell you that "mountain" here is used metaphorically representing the Government of the church. Yes, mountain can mean government! Jesus would tell His disciples that they would stand before kings and governors for a testimony (Mt 10:18), and if they had faith as a grain of mustard seed they could move "mountains"! NOT literal physical mountains... governments! Entire nations can be moved with the Gospel of Jesus Christ! That is how Jesus was using that word! That is how Jesus rules over all the nations of this planet today, through the power of the gospel (Rom 1:16). He came with the sword to conquer the nations (Rev 19:15). His warfare is not carnal. It is not physical. It is spiritual. "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" (2Cor 10:4-5).

In fact, this is how Jesus gathers or separates all nations today. This is also how Jesus separated the sheep from the goats (Mt 25:32)! Is there a Christian out there that refuses to say that Christians and the kingdom of Christ are separated from the world? No. By the way, did you catch that, "sheep and goats" represent the faithful and sinners, not literal four footed animals? But how is that separation accomplished, and when was that done? When one obeys the Gospel, that individual separates himself from the unrighteous (goats), passes "from death to life" (Jn 5:24) and escapes the judgment of God (Jn 3:36). He is then sanctified (set apart as holy). That is when separation from the world (nations) takes place in the

Christians life and he is gathered together with Christ (Eph 1:10). When; when he is born again, raised from the dead through baptism into resurrection life (Jn 3:5, Rom 6:3-6).

Another powerful example of God using words metaphorically is found in Isa 1:1-2,7 "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers." The vision was for Judah and Jerusalem and Isaiah said "hear O Heavens and Earth." Can cumulous clouds and tree bark hear and obey Gods word? Certainly Not! Verse seven clarifies it all the more. Still talking to Judah and Jerusalem which Isaiah called heaven and earth, he said your country and cities are burned and left desolate and strangers would overthrow it! Jesus uses this same language in Mt 24, regarding "the end," when Jerusalem would be destroyed and then our Lord said "Heaven and Earth shall pass away but my word shall not pass away" (Mt 24:14, 35).

When Peter wrote 2Peter 3, it was to remind the people in his day of the things spoken before by the holy prophets, apostles, and our Lord (2Pet3:1-2). Peter was reminding the people that God still had to do to Jerusalem what He had promised. That was, make their country desolate and burn it with fire (Isa 1:1-7, Deut 31:29-32:24, Mt 24, 1Ths 4:15-5:23, Gal 1:5-9). Peter quoted the mockers that made fun of Christians by saying all things continue as they always have been (2Pet 3:4) a clear statement that Judah and Jerusalem still remained when Peter wrote those words.

But Peter reminded them that God would keep His word and burn the Heaven and Earth that then was, and bring a New Heaven and Earth that was to come (Rev 21:1-10, Lk 21:22-32). And they were looking for it to happen then, 2000 years ago. 2Pet 3:13 "Nevertheless "we" (those to whom Peter wrote), according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

The "elements" that would burn with fervent heat in (2Pet 3:10, 12) referenced those Jewish "elements" of Old Covenant worship (Gal 4, Col 2, Heb 5). Do a biblical word study on the word "elements" and you will find another one of those words so inappropriately used today. This word "elements" (Greek: στοιχεῖον stoicheion) is only used seven times in the New Testament and each time it refers to Jewish covenantal "elements."

Rev 21:1-10 clearly establishes that the New Heaven and Earth *is* the bride of the Lamb, the church. But people reject that idea because in Rev 21:1 it says there would be no more "sea" when the New Heaven and Earth came. Several things we must consider are: has the bride of Christ come yet? Is it the church? And if it has come and Rev 21:1 says that at that time there would be no more "sea" we must deduce that the word "sea" is being used here in the exact same way that "heaven and earth" are being used. Metaphorically! Since Revelation is a book of symbols (Rev 1:1), then the word "sea" would symbolize something else just as the words "heaven and earth" do.

Isa 60:3-5 says, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." Notice verse 5 where it says the "sea" would be converted. Can this mean that the Mediterranean Sea could somehow become Christian? Can H2O believe the gospel? Water, the Atlantic Ocean, can that be converted to God? Certainly NOT! In context God is calling the "sea," the Gentiles! It is the Gentiles, those that would come from across the sea, from outside of Palestine, who would be converted. That is exactly what Rev 21:1 is saying.

Words are powerful. So powerful, all the Lord had to do in creation is speak, and it came into being (Gen 1:1-3). God's word(s) are equally powerful today. Should we not take the time to understand the words

that God used as God intended them to be used? Certainly, we should! We should compare spiritual things with spiritual (1Cor 2:13). We should not compare spiritual things with man's dictionary or traditional views. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (Jn 6:63). Want to move some mountains, God has given us the way. Start by studying and using Gods word as HE intended, then and only then, can those mountains be moved. [SB]