

Then Cometh the End

When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God

Steve Baisden

Can anyone say “sugar stick”? This is one of the most misapplied passages in all scripture, being used repeatedly as a proof text. It is totally ripped out of its context and misapplied by the vast majority both in the church and in the denominations. From the misuse of this one verse, several false ideologies are taught. It is taught that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus, will surrender the kingdom to His Father: that Christ will no longer reign over the kingdom, but that Jesus will give it to God the Father and cease from His kingship. It is also taught that "the end" here refers to the end of time when this physical planet will cease to exist. Both of these ideas are quite false.

The key to properly understanding any passage is to make certain that it is kept in context, BOTH immediate and remote. ALSO, it MUST harmonize with all other scripture. It MUST be accepted that if one verse contradicts any other, then the problem is in our understanding, or application of one or both verses. The problem lies with us, not with God; there are NO contradictions in the Bible. God does NOT say in one verse that Jesus will reign forever and then in another verse that His reign will end. In like manner, God does NOT say in one verse that He will end the physical planet and then in another verse that the physical planet will last forever. God is NOT the author of confusion (1Cor 14:33, Eph 3:21, Ecc1:4)

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The Bible teaches that Jesus’ reign is eternal, that He will reign forever in the everlasting kingdom;

Isa 9:6 "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful,

Isa 9:6 "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Isa 9:7 "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Luk 1:31 “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.”

Luk 1:32 “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:”

Luk 1:33 “And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

Heb 1:8 “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”

I wonder how many are willing to say, at the end of time Jesus will no longer be their King? Are you willing to say that when He returns in the judgment, and the resurrection occurs, when every eye sees Him

and every knee is bowing, that at that moment He will no longer be King of Kings and Lord of Lords? Are you willing to say that He will give His bride, the church, to His Father? Believe it or not, this is one of the "biggest" arguments those who oppose the truth of the Lord's return in the first century makes! You see, they cannot believe the passages cited above (Isa 9, Lk 1, Heb 1) or they would not make such false claims. When we understand that Jesus will reign forever, then we can know that Paul was NOT saying that Jesus was ending His reign and handing it over to His Father. I have literally had preachers say to me; "if Jesus is still reigning then He has not yet come the second time because (1Cor 15:24) says he will hand His reign over to His Father"

But what of "the end;" to what does "the end" refer? Did you know the KJV NEVER says "the end of time"? (Note: some versions do contain the phrase, but it is mistranslated. The Bible never discusses the end of time, only the time of the end.) It does say "the time of the end," and there is a big difference between the "end of time" and the "time of the end." Let's think about this from another angle. It can be "the time of the end" of a movie, or a ball game, or school, or a multitude of many other things but that does NOT mean it is the end of time!

When the Bible speaks of "the time of the end" it is speaking of the end of the Jewish age, NOT the end of this physical planet, NOT the end of Christianity, NOT the reign of Jesus, and NOT the end of time (Dan12, Mt24, 1Cor1, 1Cor15)!

The "end" of 1Cor 15:24 is the SAME "end" as Mt 24:3,14 where it is referencing the end of the age of Judaism. Notice the last question asked in Mt 24:3: "when shall be the end of the age" (NASB). This question is talking about "the end," but it is talking about the end of the AGE in which they were living THEN, which was the Mosaic age, the age of the Law. They were NOT in the Christian age at that time. Jesus answered this question however in Mt 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 assures us that the gospel DID indeed go into all the world (Col 1:5-6,23). Jesus knew how long it would take for the gospel to go into all the world, He knew it would be in that generation because he plainly said so; Mat 24:34 "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." But yet people still say the end has not come and defy the very words of our Lord and His disciples. How is it possible to claim allegiance to Christ and deny what He promised? Jesus promised "the end" would come before that generation would pass.

Paul talks about "the end" in other passages in 1 Corinthians and if he identifies which end, and when it would take place, that should help to settle the end to which he refers in (1Cor 15:24). Paul assures the Corinthians that the miraculous gifts would confirm them unto "the end" (1Cor 1:6-8). In 1Cor 15:51-52 Paul assures **the Corinthians** that they would not all die physically until the last trump sounded, and the resurrection would take place. In 1 Cor 10:11 Paul said the end of the age had come upon the Corinthians 2000 years ago. Can there be any doubt to what the end of (1Cor 15:24) is talking about? It is NOT talking about the end of time and it is not talking about the end of this physical planet! IT IS talking about the end of the age, the Mosaic age, the old covenant age which was waxing old, decaying, and was ready to vanish away (Heb 8:13). It is not talking about the end of time, or the end of the eternal purpose of God which continues through the church (Eph 3:9-11).

Paul also mentions the end in (1Cor 13). It is not explicitly stated as "the end" but it is referenced in the phrase "that which is perfect is come." That which is "PERFECT" certainly includes the completion of the written word, the Bible, but it is far more than just the completion of Revelation from God! The word "perfect" is translated from the Greek word: τέλειος teleios tel'-i-os From G5056; complete (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc.); neuter (as noun, with G3588) completeness: - of full age, man, perfect. It does NOT mean that which is without blemish or fault, it means "completeness."

Question, what was still "incomplete" when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians and what was Paul still looking forward to happening in order for completeness to be considered "come"? Certainly, the word of God, at

that time, still had to come in its completeness, but was that all? Would the word of God only, by itself, fulfill that which still had not happened that Paul was looking forward to coming? Certainly NOT!

Paul was looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor 1:7). He was looking for "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor 1:8). He was looking for "the end" (1Cor 1:8, 15:24). He was looking for the deliverance of the kingdom (1Cor 15:24). He was looking for the resurrection (1Cor 15:52), which he promised the Corinthians that they would not all die before the resurrection came (1Cor 15:51-52). He was looking for the sting of death to be taken away and Hades to be conquered (1Cor 15:55). He was looking for victory over the strength of sin, the law, and that **MUST BE OLD TESTAMENT LAW** because the gospel of Jesus Christ is NOT the strength of Sin, it is the CURE of sin (1Cor 15:56).

In short, Paul was looking for what Jesus promised when he said "that which is complete." He was looking for fulfillment of ALL prophecy (Mt 5:17-18; Lk 21:20-32)! Paul's expectations could never have been "complete" if (???) still lacking! NEVER! In fact, regarding the ending of miracles, Paul told the Corinthians that they would have the miraculous gifts until JESUS CAME (1Cor 1:7-8)! But then we have the audacity to turn around and say that Paul only meant the written word of God in its fullness in (1Cor 13:10)? NO WAY! That which is perfect meant that which is complete and it meant everything promised would be fulfilled and only then would the miraculous cease. THAT WOULD BE THE END of Judaism and the old world where there was no remission of sin. That would be the end of the curse that Adam brought into this world (1Cor 15:22).

That which is perfect includes the written word, but it ALSO includes all prophecy just as Paul was teaching and as Jesus taught (Mt 5:17-18, Lk 21:20-32, Mt 16:27-28, Mt 12:41-42, etc). Jesus either came when He promised or He didn't. If He didn't we might as well throw the Bible away. If He did, we better be accepting it and teaching it as it was taught 2000 years ago!

So, what was Paul saying when he said "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God..." (1Cor 15:24)? He was talking about the end of the old age which would end the curse of Adam, when the restitution of relationship of man back to God the Father would be complete (1Cor 15:22-28). CONTEXT! 1Cor 15:24 is right smack dab in the middle of 1Cor 15:22-28 in which Paul discusses the death of ADAM. Paul was not alluding to physical death, Paul knew that Abel was the first to die physically NOT Adam (Gen 4:8). Paul was talking about the death that Adam brought into this world in the very day that he partook of the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:17). That death was separation from God: sin death (Isa 59:1-2, Rom 6:23). Adam was placed outside the garden and mankind was separated from God. Jesus came to bring back that which was lost by Adam and that is what Paul was talking about when he said that Jesus would "deliver the kingdom back to God, even the Father" (1Cor 15:24). At that event God would again be "all in all" (1Cor 15:28).

This is fulfillment of Zec 14:9 "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one." In what day? Zec 14:1-2 When the nations would be gathered together against Jerusalem! When Paul wrote 1Cor 15:24 this had NOT yet happened! This would be the end when all things written would be fulfilled (Lk 21:20-32). This would be when the Lord Jesus would sit and reign on the throne with God (Rev 22:3) "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:" This is when the restitution of all things would happen, when God would be back in fellowship with man through Christ. The kingdom would be delivered back to its original status as it was in the garden of Eden, when The Father would be with those who are faithful. No longer separated by Hades "grave" (1Cor 15:55).

This is exactly what Jesus said in (Jn 14:1-4) Jesus was going to prepare a place and would come back to us, and that is where He would be, with us. John 14:23 "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This is what Paul was talking about in (1Cor 15:24) when the Father and the Son would be again All in All on the throne with their people as it was in the beginning (1Cor 15:22-28, Gen1-3, Rev 22).

Delivering up the kingdom cannot mean the end of Jesus' reign. And "the end" cannot mean the end of time. Therefore, should we not allow scripture to harmonize and accept the fact that this "change" would take place EXACTLY WHEN Paul said it would in (1Cor 15)? Paul said it would come before they (the Corinthians, 2000 years ago) would all die. 1Co 15:51-52 "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Scripture is NOT wrong! – [SB]

666 – Nero? Maybe Not!

Holger Neubauer

The mysterious number of 666, found in Revelation 13:18, has had more conjecture and commentary than most any number of significance found in the Bible. Proposed solutions to the identity of "the Man" have been: Trajan, Caligula, Julian the Apostate, Genseric the Vandal, Pope Benedict IX, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Nero of the first century. It was in Luther in 1519 that made the case that Pope Leo X was the Antichrist and identified him as 666; and now most protestant theologians believe the Pope's office is referred to and 666 points to the ruling Pope at the time of Christ's future return. Many even within the Lord's church espouse this view. For instance, Brother Howard Denham repeated this denominational doctrine in our recent debate. Others believe that because the text identifies 666 is, "the number of a man," the ancients believed that the answer would lie in the way that man numbers, which invites many to the study of gematria, attributing numerical values to names. Many partial preterists, like Foy Wallace and Kenneth Gentry, believe that Nero Caesar is the answer by using this system: Hebrew letters are ascribed numerical values, and by adding an "n" at the end of Nero's name (Kaiser Neron) the desired outcome of 666 is discovered. Yet, if this is correct, it contradicts the way the rest of the Revelation should be understood.

The book of Revelation is most Hebraic book of the New Testament. Its symbols are exceedingly Jewish in nature. One scholar by the name of Fruchtenbaum counted over 500 references to the Old Testament in the Revelation. Sometimes three and four Old Testament verses are cited or alluded to in one verse of the Revelation. With this in mind, it occurred to me that the answer to the number should be found in the Old Testament, not a mysterious numbering system. A patient look at the numbers 6, 60, 66, and 666 in the Old Testament bring about some interesting results. Solomon's yearly income was 666 talents of gold (1 Kings 10:14). There were six steps that approached Solomon's throne (1 Kings 10:20). The tabernacle was built with 60 pillars (Exodus 38:9-20). The little chambers on Ezekiel's vision of the temple were 6 by 6, and the posts were "of 60 cubits" (Ezekiel 40:12-14). The door of the temple was "6 cubits" (Ezekiel 41:3). The great image of Nebuchadnezzar was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide (Daniel 3:1). Goliath's height was "6 cubits and a span" (1 Samuel 16:4). The number 666 points to temple imagery and those who are fighting the people of God.

Revelation 13, contains images of two beasts: one sea beast and another land beast. In apocalyptic literature, the sea has reference to the Gentiles, for they approached by the Mediterranean Sea, and came from outside of the land of Palestine. Isaiah predicted that one day the Sea would be converted to the light of Israel. He said, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light" (Isaiah 60:3). Isaiah continued, "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" (Isaiah 60:5). When John mentioned, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea," he was not referring to the material creation but differences between Jew and Gentile which would be done away when the law ended and Judaism destroyed. This echoes Paul's statement, that resurrection would bring about God "all and in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28), a clear reference to Jew and Gentile in one body (Colossians 3:11). The heavens and the earth are a reference to relationship with God above (heavens) and relationship with man beneath (earth). The Sea beast of Revelation 13:1,2

is a reference to Rome who acquired its persecution power from the three previous regimes: leopard (Greece), bear (Medo-Persian) and Lion (Babylonian). This theme of acquiring the persecuting power of the previous regimes is found in Daniel 7:5,8,24, the very text that John alludes to in Revelation 13 and 17. Throughout the New Testament we find Roman authority, working in tandem with Jewish authority to persecute the church. It was Felix, a Roman ruler, who was said to “shew the Jews a pleasure” by leaving Paul bound (Acts 24:27). When the Jews wanted Christ crucified, they cried, “we have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15). John saw the sea beast (Roman empire) with its seven heads (seven Caesar's) and supporting ten horns (Jewish vassal kings) in persecuting the church (Revelation 13:1).

John saw another beast arising out of the “earth,” which is better translated “land” (Revelation 13:11). To the Jew, the “land” is their land: the land of Palestine. Thus, the land beast arose from Palestine. The “earth” is consistently used as the land of Palestine and is marked by 1600 furlongs in Revelation 14:20 which is about 180 miles, which Wallace says is the “whole of Palestine.” The land beast is most assuredly Judaism which received its right to persecute the church from Rome. The Jews had a legal right to practice their religion and the church was Jewish for the first 12 years its existence. This is why Rome viewed the church as a Jewish problem. The ruler of the land must then be the High Priest, of whom Jesus said, “Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven” (Matthew 26:64). This is the man of sin who was sitting in the Temple of God, claiming to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The Thessalonians were enduring a Jewish persecution (Acts 17:1-6). The High Priest gave the authority for the Jewish Christians persecution (Acts 7:1; 9:1,2; 22:5) and was called by Paul the “ruler” of the Jewish people (Acts 23:5). Jesus would destroy him and his authority to persecute by his coming in 70 with the Roman armies. All the Jewish authorities were in Palestine honoring the Passover feast as the Roman authorities approached Jerusalem. Josephus records that the Roman General Titus let the pilgrims in, but did not let them out. These were the days that Jesus warned, “And when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know the desolation is nigh, Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and not let them that are in the countries enter there into” (Luke 21:20,21).

The number 666 is a number associated with the temple. The Old Testament points to it. Do we really believe that the Bible can only be understood by studying the gematria of the early scholars and what they believed about it?

Does it not make more sense that the answer is in the Bible itself? Does it not make more sense that the Old Testament is the key for finding the answer to 666? Of course, it does! Though many in our brotherhood, like brother Denham, take the position that the Pope is the Man of Sin, the truth of the matter is that is a denominational idea, much like the literal 1000-year reign of Jesus upon a literal throne upon the earth; they both have the same amount of Biblical support: zero! The Bible is its best interpreter, including matters of eschatology. It is past time that we go back to searching for Bible answers to Bible questions. [HN]

Q&A: Who is Babylon?

Q: Who Is Babylon in the Book of Revelation?

A: Babylon is the city of Jerusalem. One of the major reasons there is so much confusion and controversy surrounding the Apocalypse (Revelation) is because Babylon is misidentified. Many want to make Babylon Rome: either referring to the actual city, the seat of the old Empire, or else the Christianized version, the seat of the Papacy. Both are equally wrong, and as stated previously, are a major cause as to why the book is so mysterious. Identifying Babylon as Jerusalem will answer many questions and make the book make more sense, putting it in line with the rest of the Bible.

The first thing to understand about Revelation is the time statements: “the things which must shortly take place” (1:1); “the time is near” (1:3); “I am coming quickly” (22:7, 12, 20); “the time is near”

(22:10). Whatever Revelation is about, one thing that should be abundantly clear is that the book is about something that was about to happen from the perspective of the original audience. Yet, it amazes me how many who know that God made time itself, yet is not capable of telling time. There are so many that have no problem with this book taking thousands of years to come to pass, in spite of what God said. Many will appeal to 2 Peter 3:8, saying that time is different to God because He is outside of it, therefore 2000 years is just a blink of the eye to God. I want to agree with that idea, but it goes against what the Bible teaches. If something is far off in the future, God does not say that it is near. For instance, the reign of terror of Antiochus IV is the subject of Daniel 8, and there Daniel is specifically told to seal up the vision because it pertains to many days in the future (26). Contrast that with Revelation 22:10. John is specifically told the opposite: "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near." This automatically rules out Babylon as being Papal Rome, since the Papacy is still alive and well. This also rules out pagan Rome as well: the traditional date of the fall of Rome is the fall of the city, the seat of the Western Empire. At the time of the fall of the city, the empire was divided and the Eastern Empire (Byzantines) continued to flourish, even retaking the city. The Eastern Empire would not fall for another 1000 years, which is well outside of the time frame set by Daniel 8:26

Now we know that Babylon cannot be Rome, in any way, how can we be sure that it is Jerusalem? This is a great Bible question, and it deserves a Bible answer. The description of Babylon is given in Revelation 17:4-6. Pay special attention to verse 6: "And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered greatly." What city/nation was guilty of the blood of the saints? Jesus has the answer to that question:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets. Consequently, you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell? Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! "For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mt 23:29-39)

We have the words of Jesus positively identifying the nation/city who is guilty of the blood of the prophets. Can there be any more doubt?

Notice also that she is riding the beast with seven heads (3), and also notice the beast is eventually going to turn on her, and burn her with fire (16). The seven-headed beast is an obvious reference to Rome, which begs the question: in what way did Jerusalem ride Rome? Let me answer that question with one of my own: how did the Jews get Jesus to be crucified?

12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar."

14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" 15 They therefore cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." John 19:12, 14-15

Jesus was crucified as an enemy of the state, not a blasphemer. His death was political, not religious, as far as the Romans were concerned. The Jews used the Romans to accomplish their goal: this is how the harlot (Babylon-Jerusalem) rides the beast (Rome).

Lastly, remember that the beast turned on the harlot and burned her with fire (Rev 17:16). History, primarily the works of Josephus, plainly shows us the fulfillment of this prophecy. Problems and tensions rising by the middle of the first century A.D. Things finally reached the boiling point in 67, and the Jews revolted. Nero dispatched Vespasian to put down the rebellion, which he ultimately did. Nero committed suicide in 68, and after a year of civil wars (putting the Judean campaign on hold), Vespasian assumed the throne and commissioned his son Titus to finish the job. Titus wished to spare the temple as a monument to Rome, but in the end, it was burned and thrown down, as Jesus prophesied 40 years earlier (MT 24:2).

Denham's Dilemma

"Trilemma of the Law"

Holger Neubauer

The famous argument proposed by C.S. Lewis concerning nature of Christ suggests that Jesus was either a liar, lunatic or the Son of God. Lewis argued that Jesus was neither a liar, nor a lunatic; therefore, the Lord. This pithy argument is both provoking and persuasive. The same form of the argument can be made with Paul's relationship to the law as he follows the advice of an inspired apostle and ruling elders of the Jerusalem church in Acts 21. Let us consider.

As Paul entered Jerusalem with his service from the Gentile churches his prayer was the Jewish churches would receive the gift (Romans 15:31). This was the first time that there was to be open fellowship with the Gentile churches and the Jewish churches of Palestine. The sharing was received "gladly" (Acts 21:17). Yet, the Jewish leaders of the church had a concern. They had heard that Paul taught the Jewish Christians among the Gentiles that they ought not circumcise their children nor keep the law (Acts 21:21). To demonstrate that the charges were not true, the elders of the church and the inspired apostle James reported that among the Jewish Christians in their oversight were four men who had a vow that was to be fulfilled. Their advice to Paul was this, "take them and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou walkest orderly, and keepest the law." There are three possibilities as to the motivation of Paul's purification. Either Paul was ignorant of his Christian responsibility, arrogant in that responsibility, or a faithful Jew and a faithful Christian at the same time. The latter proves the law was still in force for the Jewish Christians.

Let us consider the first objection. Was Paul ignorant of what he was doing? The answer is no. The book of Romans, in which Paul expounds his relationship to the law, was written before he came to Jerusalem with his offering from the Gentile churches. He urged the Romans to pray that his "service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints" (Romans 15:31). That means that the events of Acts 21 take place nearly thirty years after Pentecost as the book of Romans was written near 60 A.D. Paul knew full well of his relationship to the law. Nevertheless, he would later say, "Whereupon certain Jews of Asia found me purified in the temple" (Acts 24:18). Paul affirmed that he had passed through the purification process which included animal sacrifices, because the Nazirite vow demanded it (Numbers 6:10; 14). Paul was not ignorant of what he was doing. The animal sacrifices that he participated in was with the approval of not only himself, but with the entire Jerusalem eldership and inspired apostle James! This point cannot be ignored. When presenting this argument in debate, brother Denham became confused and then asked if I knew that the book of Romans was written before Acts 21. Of course, I did, that was my whole argument! Denham's inability to grasp my argument no doubt contributed to his confusion. He was a like a sailor who lost his way at sea. Poor brother Denham, we hope he does better for the next debate in April.

The next objection is that Paul was arrogant. Did he sin? No, he did not. He would argue that he lived in clear conscience before God after that event (Acts 23:1; 24:16). Now we would ask, are animal sacrifices a matter of option today? Isaiah predicted a time to come when a lamb would be considered like a dog's neck if offered to God (Isaiah 66:3). Though not an option today, it was then. Why? Because as far as the law concerned, it was dying, but was not yet dead. Brother Howard Denham argued in debate with me that Paul had done this to influence the Jews and cited 1 Corinthians 9:21. We do not deny that Paul did things to influence the disobedient Jews, but what he did in Jerusalem was not to influence the disobedient Jews, but to demonstrate to the Jewish Christians that he still kept the law! Listen again to the statement of James and the elders, "Thou seest brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law" (Acts 21:20). Denham failed to see the implication of his position, for it allows animal sacrifices to be offered as a matter of influence still today. Since instrumental music was also a practice of the Old Testament, will Denham allow instruments to be used for influence sake? Denham's doctrine implies that instrumental music is an option today. Denham's argument failed miserably. His casuistry is fully exposed, his inconsistency doubly demonstrated.

The only other possibility is that Paul was a faithful Jew and a faithful Christian at the same time. As Jewish Christians obeyed the gospel, they would escape the condemnation of the law but not its responsibilities. For the Jew, the law served as the civil law as does our nations' civil law. Dub McClish argued this in the Bellview lectures in 2015. We want to thank brother McClish for pointing out this truth, though he said it was only his opinion. Should brother McClish affirm that his convictions are more than opinions, we wonder if Denham will be consistent and mark Dub as a false teacher? The whole Bellview Lectureship of 2015, which highlighted our teaching, is now taken down from public internet access. This was probably done to keep us from using it against them. With all the inconsistency and false doctrine at Bellview, we agree that it should be taken down from Internet access as well. McClish was right about the law of Moses serving as a civil law for the Jews. Consider. If a young man who is not a Christian should speed through a school zone in our day at 100 mph, he would violate both man's law and God's (1 Peter 2:13). Should he obey the Gospel, he would free himself from the guilt incurred by the speeding, but not from the responsibility of not speeding in the future. Civil law can condemn us, but it cannot save us. The law could condemn the Jews, but it could not save them. Becoming dead to the consequences of the law and being made free from its responsibilities are two different things.

The early Jewish Christians became dead to the law through their baptism (Romans 6:1-6). While in Christ, the law could not condemn them (Romans 7:4; 8:1). Being dead to the Law's guilt does not imply the law had died. The Hebrew writer said, "a new covenant, He hath the first old. That which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:13). Hebrews 10:1, says, "the law having a shadow of good things to come." While the Hebrew letter was being written it still contained the shadows of good things that were yet to come. What was the Law a shadow of? What was coming? The reference is not to heaven, but the fullness of the church of the heavenly age. The same truth is found in 2 Corinthians 3:11 which says, "For if that which is being done away" (NKJV). The Law was dying, but was not dead at the time of the New Testament writing. Though the Jewish Christian would not do things that would conflict with his relationship with Christ (Acts 5:29), following temple protocol was not one of them (Acts 3:1; Acts 24:11). Just as we follow civil law today, but not for justification before God, so too the Jews followed the law of Moses until the time God made it impossible to follow the Law by destroying the temple. Adam Clarke makes this astute observation,

"The Jewish economy was not yet destroyed nor had God as yet signified that the whole of its observances were done away. He continued to tolerate that dispensation, which was to be in a certain measure in force till the destruction of Jerusalem; and from that period it was impossible for them to observe their own ritual. Thus God abolished the Mosaic dispensation by

rendering in the course of His providence, the observance of it impossible.”

[Clarke's Commentary, Volume 5, Matthew-Acts; p. 859]

Since brother Denham is no enamored with dead Denominational scholars, I'm sure he'll enjoy this quote. Will bro. Denham deal with it? We wish that not only he, but that all those that disagree with us, simply look into these matters more deeply and honestly deal with them. Truth has nothing to fear. We certainly do not. [HN]

Reserved unto Fire – Part 4

Scott Klaft

In 2nd Peter 3:1, 2, the apostle states that he was writing to remind his readers of what both the prophets and the apostles had taught. In the previous installments of this series, we have been examining the things Peter had spoken previously. Acts 2, 3, and 4 were the examples cited. We recognized Peter's references to the Old Testament scriptures when he spoke of such eschatological subjects as “the day of the Lord,” the “day of judgment,” the “coming of the day of God,” and the “promise of His coming” – all of which Peter addressed in 2nd Peter 3.

What about the things Peter, himself, had *written* previously concerning these end-time themes? Does Peter address the same subjects in his previous letter? He does, and it *must be harmonized* with our understanding of 2nd Peter 3. He flatly said he was writing to remind the reader of those things.

The Context of 1st Peter

There is much more eschatological significance in 1st Peter than just a few quick proof-passages. Space is limited, however. Comments on those end-time subjects must be, of necessity, confined to those passages that appear most obvious from the first letter. Starting with **1st Peter 1:3-12**.

The word “us” in v. 3 is of significance, and encompasses those to whom he addressed the letter in 1:1, 2 while including himself. He is addressing the first generation of Christians – those “scattered” or “dispersed” throughout the civilized world, and beyond, in the middle of the First Century (cf. Acts 8:1-4; 11:19). God had “begotten” them to what Peter calls, “a living hope.” The agency, or the means by which that hope is accomplished is through “the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Verse 4 is a continuation of Peter's description of God's purpose for having “begotten” them: “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away”. This speaks of the eternal nature of that “living hope.” The fact that it was “reserved in heaven” speaks of that eternal hope's origination, and the place where it waited before they could inherit it. While they waited, they were “kept” (v. 5). Vincent's Word Studies (electronic edition) says that is a military term, meaning, ‘guarded.’ They were guarded “through faith for salvation ready to be revealed.” The implications of that are powerful.

Peter has here explicitly stated that *salvation* and the eternal *inheritance* for which the first generation of Christians had *hope* – by virtue of having been “begotten... again” (v. 3) – had *not yet* arrived, *but it was ready*. When would it be “revealed”? It would be “...in the last time” (v. 5). We have already established that Peter identified his present generation as living in “the last days” (see Part 2 in *Spirit & Life, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 3-7*).

The apostle John (with whom Peter's writings would not conflict) identified “the last time” as present already (see 1Jn. 2:18, 19). But, are we not taught by the scriptures that those who obeyed the gospel from Acts 2 and forward did indeed have salvation, adoption into the family of God by which they possessed the inheritance? Yes. It does. This is what is known as, “The already, but not yet,” of scripture. The technical term for this form of speech is called a “prolepsis.” (See Romans 4:17 to see biblical proof that inspiration does in fact use this form of speech.) They had it. But they had to wait for it. It is not unlike

having the legal possession of a house that is still under construction. The owners have every legal claim to the house, but it is not yet ready to move-in and live there.

Would it be a long wait for that first generation of Christians? Would 2000-and-still-counting years fit the description of “ready to be revealed”? Not if there are any qualifiers in the context that would limit that time. Peter writes, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials...” (1Pet. 1:6).

He said they would be enduring the trials “for a little while,” implying that they, that first generation, would come out on the other side of those trials and receive that *hope*, the *eternal inheritance*, and *salvation*. They did so in faith – *a faith* explained in v. 8 as *loving the Lord* though they had never seen Him physically – *loving Him* to the degree that they might rejoice in the middle of difficulties because they were able to *trust in Him*. He would make-good on His promises of salvation and eternal inheritance. They saw the bigger picture. They knew God would satisfy that *living hope*, and they were then able to endure the trials they faced. This is how they could be “found in glory at the revelation...” – the revealing of that which was “ready to be revealed.” It is the “revealing” (or the *apocalypse*) “of Jesus Christ.”

Yes, the apocalypse of Jesus Christ (The Revelation of Jesus Christ) has either taken place within the lifetimes of those Christians to whom Peter first wrote, or they never did receive their salvation, or their inheritance; and, Peter’s idea of a “living hope” is completely without meaning, and their suffering was in vain. These are the same people to whom Peter said he was *reminding them* in 2nd Peter 3 of what he had said before as he addressed the subjects of the coming of the Lord, Judgment, and the last days.

Verse 9 says all of that was to be revealed in a “little while,” the salvation and inheritance, the end-goal and point of having to live by faith through those trials. Verse 10 through 12 says it was that *very same salvation* spoken of by the Old Testament prophets. In fact, those prophets were not ministering to themselves or even to their own generation... but to Peter’s generation! This is why he was *reminding* them in 2nd Peter 3 of what those prophets had said and what he had already taught to them. It was to be completed and fulfilled in the generation in which Peter lived.

But that passage need not stand alone. 1st Peter 1:20 positively identifies what Peter perceived as “these last times” and it included those first generation of Christians, the original recipients of this writing by the apostle.

1st Peter 1:24, 25

In this passage, Peter makes application of Isaiah 40:6-8. But remember: Peter thinks like a Hebrew and is importing the entirety of the passage of which he only quotes a portion. This makes the previously noted identification of “these last times” in 1st Peter 1:20 very interesting to say the least. Because what Peter is emphasizing is that the Lord Jesus had been made “manifest” to his generation in “these last times.” Peter’s quotation of Isaiah 40 comes right out of the context of the prophecy regarding John the baptizer (cf. Isa. 40:3-5; Mark 1:3; et. al.). The context of Isaiah 40 that follows what Peter quoted was the message that the Forerunner, the Messenger would be making known to Judah. He was telling them to “Behold your God” (Isa. 40:9ff; cf. Jn. 1:19-34).

This is strong evidence that Peter is indicating that the period of “these last days” had begun from the beginning of John’s work to make manifest the Lord Jesus. The overall message by John was what Peter was citing; the Lord God was coming, and the mightiest of man-made powers were as withering grass and fading flowers before Him. His word is that incorruptible seed by which the Christians had been “born again” (1Pet. 1:23); but, all nations stand before Him to be judged (cf. Matt. 25:30, 31; Jn. 12:48), and “...When He will also blow on them, And they will wither, And the whirlwind will take them away like stubble” (Isa. 40:24). This, in fact, *was* the message of John (cf. Matt. 3:7-12). The “last days” of which Peter spoke in 2nd Peter 3 was either the same as the “last days” begun by John the baptizer and ending with the destruction of the Jewish nation in AD 70, or there are *two sets* of “last days.” Only one of which

Peter has in mind when merely reminding his readers of having addressed it before – and, of which must also be found in the Old Covenant scriptures.

Want to be confused in the realm of eschatology? Try making the assertion that 2nd Peter 3 is a different “last days” than that of the last days of Judah. Not only does that confuse what Peter actually says in the first two verses, but it also forces a confused understanding of 1st Peter 1:24, 25, not to mention the role of John the baptizer in God’s plan.

1st Peter 4:7

Wouldn’t it stand to reason that, if Peter saw the “last days” as having begun with John’s work in making the Lord manifest, that he would also know that the end of those “last days” was near? It’s difficult to have a “last days” without some limit on the “days” that were “last.” Did Peter know exactly what day and what hour were the last? Maybe not, but frankly, it isn’t beyond the realm of possibility that he may have known. Did he have to know the specific numeric counting of the days in order to know that “...the end of all things is at hand”? These are his words in 1st Peter 4:7.

Did you realize Peter isn’t alone in making this statement? Consider the words of the wise James when he said, “...Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days” (Jms 5:3). He said, “...be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord” (Jms 5:7). He said, “Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (Jms 5:8). He said, “Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” (Jms 5:9).

Do we think that, even though they use the same language to speak of the same things that James and Peter had no idea of the nearness or imminence of the end of which they spoke by inspiration? They knew it was near during their lifetime. It is not reasonable to try to force 2000-and-still-counting years into what they meant without violating the hermeneutical rules of context – that what was written had to have relevance to those to whom the writings were originally given.

Don’t worry. We will get to Paul’s writings by the end of this series.

It is not exegetically possible to conclude that they spoke of different times. Nor would that be consistent with Peter’s linking his, and the other apostle’s (as well as Old Covenant scriptures) teaching on these times in 2nd Peter 3:1, 2. Peter’s “last days” and “coming of the Lord” and “coming of the day of God” and “day of judgment” in 2nd Peter 3 *must* harmonize with what he said, and what other inspired penmen said, and what Old Covenant scripture said about them. This demands the imminence of all those phrases within Peter’s generational lifetime.

In the next installment, we will examine another passage from 1st Peter that must be harmonized with 2nd Peter 3 as the result of being the same subject matter and Peter directly informing us that he is readdressing those subjects in 2nd Peter 3. You’ll notice we started with fairly remote contexts, looking at the inspired record of when Peter had addressed the same themes as 2nd Peter 3. The nearer context then comes from his own pen. Then we will move on to an examination of the more direct context of the letter, 2nd Peter, itself. The first two chapters contain a great deal that should direct our understanding of the third chapter. [SK]