

**HOPE FOR TOMORROW:  
A REBUTTAL TO APOCALYPTIC DETERMINISM**

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**THE SEPARATIST TRUST, 1983  
(Reformatted, 2022)**



## PREFACE

As a personal note, I must say that this paper certainly does not contain my final position on eschatology in all of its details. But the major turn of mind on this subject has been clear and definite. My opinion is that many known eschatological views are wholly inadequate in interpreting contemporary events or accommodating the Scriptural description of the Church's mission in the earth. Indeed, much of the calamity in the world today may be indirectly linked, at least, to false eschatological hopes within the Church.

This subject has become a very important issue in my mind in view of our turbulent age. Resultant anxiety has led me to my prayer closet on many occasions, hoping that the Almighty would grant some understanding of His intentions. I laid hold upon His promise in Amos 3:7 which reads:

Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets. (NIV)

Searching the Holy Scriptures again and again has led me, I believe, to a workable position that will justifiably discard several popular positions within Christendom.

It is impossible for a paper of this size to exhaustively refute all of the positions discarded. A bibliography will supply a listing of books that do so. This essay focuses on the rebuttal of an underlying principle of determinism in popular views and offers a positive alternative embracing postmillennialism couched in a soteriological model of eschatology.

What I have said must stand or fall upon its own merits. He who would reject my position must first refute it to be fair. This essay has been purposely designed to avoid as many personalities as possible, so that the reader may concentrate on the concepts presented in the following pages.

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of eschatology refers to the "discourse about the last things" and often refers to that part of Christian doctrine concerned with the final end of man and the universe. Traditionally, it has encompassed such matters as the second coming of Christ (or the *parousia*), the resurrection of the dead, the immortality of the soul, the final judgment, and heaven and hell.

To this time, there has been no general church council that has set forward a creed concerning the timing of the last things as a test of orthodoxy. The Church has done so on the Trinity and the nature of Christ, but not on this issue. The creeds do state the certainty of the *parousia*, the resurrection, and the final judgment. They have also stated belief in a state of punishment for the wicked and a state of reward for the righteous. These are to be regarded as Biblical facts, not to be doubted by the faithful. However, there has been no orthodox position concerning the occasion or the sequence of how these events will transpire. That is not to say there is no correct, Biblical position; but it is to say that from the earliest times, godly men have differed in their views.

The point to be made here is that it is not fair to charge a Christian brother with heresy simply because he disagrees with your eschatological position. It appears that the term "heresy" is often loosely used these days. But, it does not take the place of Biblical research; and it does no good to resolve differences of opinion. A Christian brother will "search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so" (Acts 17:11). He will also remember that the Lord Jesus discouraged speculation in this field of study when He told His disciples:

It is not for you to know the times or the seasons the Father hath placed in His own power. (Acts 1:7)

Even Jesus denied conclusive knowledge of these things (Matthew 24:36).

So then, we must *first* recognize God's sovereignty over the consummation of history. Our limited source of knowledge concerning His intentions lies within the confines of revealed theology. A man may observe the fact of death as a natural observation; but unless God should reveal to him its purpose, he could never find it out. Likewise, the consummation of history will occur; but to describe its manner of coming beyond what is written (as many have) is unwise. Therefore, our discussion will be confined to Scriptural pronouncements concerning the kingdom of God, which we find is the theme of the Bible.

Second, eschatology should not be dismissed or ignored simply because God is the prime mover in history. He wants us to know what His intentions are (John 15:15). Some have argued that eschatology is unimportant because a Christian should be motivated by love in doing the will of God and not by the prospects of success. However, it is not a question of motive which postmillennialism addresses, but a question of promise. One's motive, indeed, should be to love doing the will of God regardless of the cost. But faith must teach us His will. What is the promise of God in which our faith may reside? That is the question I address.

The Bible was written for the purpose of revealing God's will, which includes His Covenant promises.

Third, the study of eschatology is important because a man, by nature, is motivated by the feasibility of his efforts. A negative eschatology contributes to a feeling of futility and ultimate defeat.

Illustrations can be cited in the prognosis of disease. Physicians acknowledge that a patient's attitude can profoundly affect the course of a disease. If the patient is optimistic concerning his recovery, the body responds with greater intensity in fighting back the disease. Pessimism brings an opposite reaction.

In the work force, the feasibility of a task affects the motivation to succeed. Senseless and futile work inevitably leads to lethargy. A man's goals affect the means employed. If they are worthwhile goals, more care will be taken in the means of accomplishing them.

No less in fulfilling the Great Commission. If it is an impractical assignment with only temporal success to be expected, who but the insane would attempt it. If it is feasible, then expect breathtaking heroism and godly exploits.<sup>1</sup>

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13,14)

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matthew 28:18)

Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. (Daniel 7:27)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . . (Acts 1:8)

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.  
(Luke 10:19) NIV<sup>2</sup>

The Kingdom of God refers to the rule and reign of God over all His creation. Some have mistaken it for the nation of Israel. Others have equated it as the institutional church or the universal church. Each is certainly a part of God's Kingdom but is not the sum of it. "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Psalms 103:19).

Another theory holds that distinctions must be made between terms such as "the kingdom of heaven" and "The kingdom of God" and also between "the kingdom of Christ" and "the kingdom of God". To answer the first distinction, it is unwarranted for synoptic reasons. The reader will find that the term "kingdom of heaven" is only found with recurrence in Matthew's gospel. The term "kingdom of God" is used by Mark and Luke where the term "the kingdom of heaven" is used by Matthew/ This interchange reveals that they are synonymous terms much like saying "the Reagan Administration" or "the Washington Administration". The term "the kingdom of God" explains who the King is, and "the kingdom of heaven" explains from where the King reigns.

To answer the latter contention that a distinction exists between "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of Christ", it must be discarded because it questions the unity of God. As the Scriptures teach, "Hear O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord" (Mark 12:29). There is only one kingdom in heaven.

God rules over two encompassing realms in His creation. The first is the physical or non-moral realm. This realm includes the part of God's Dominion that is under the laws of cause and effect, such as: the planets, the trees and the animals. The second realm is the realm of moral government. In this realm God governs by moral law and sanctions. Men and angels come under this category because they are moral agents; that is, they can originate their own actions apart from any inside or outside influence.

The key word in the non-moral realm is "necessity". A non-moral entity cannot "will" to resist causation. It has no ability to choose.

The key word in the moral realm is "freedom". The moral agent can choose to resist moral law. It has a free will. Where causation is the moving factor in the non-moral realm, influence is the moving factor in the moral realm. Therefore, men and angels have the capacity to rebel against design, and in turn, their Maker.

Jesus prayed to His Father, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Some have interpreted that passage to mean that the Kingdom of God is in Heaven, but not on Earth. That is not true. Men may rebel, but God will never be overthrown. He imposes the sanctions against their rebellion. Men may have the capacity to resist design but not to overcome it.<sup>4</sup> Design will turn against the rebel and destroy him. To sin is to die. It is suicide. Here we see predestination, not of individuals, but of consequences. Mortal men cannot set aside the moral law and its sanctions. Neither is God arbitrary in their enforcement. There is no neutral ground in God's Domain, even for the rebel. He is already beginning to experience the sentence of death (John 3:18).

So then, God's will is being done on Earth (death for sin) but not as it is in Heaven (life for righteousness). His Kingdom is here on Earth, but not as it is in Heaven. In Heaven men and angels are blessed because there is no sin (Revelation 12:12). On Earth, the battle rages against the wicked until the wicked are disinherited out of the earth.<sup>5</sup> "The meek shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Then the Kingdom of God will be on Earth as it is in Heaven.

It is here that the parables of Christ concerning the Kingdom become so helpful in sorting out our muddled thoughts on this subject. Christ begins with the Parable of the Sower in Matthew chapter 13. Here Christ teaches His disciples that the only persons who receive the blessings of the Kingdom are those who understand the Word of the Kingdom and keep it. Their fruitfulness marks them as the citizens of the Kingdom.

The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares follows and teaches us that there will be a continuity of history until the final judgment. This is so because it is difficult to discriminate between the wheat and the tares until they bear their fruit-- the wheat with evident blessings, the tares with evident cursings. "By their fruits, ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:16). The process of epistemological self-consciousness grows until individuals fully understand the true nature and implications of their choices. This is followed by blessings for the righteous (Matt. 5:1-12) and cursings for the wicked (Matt. 23:13-33).

The Parable of the Mustard Seed teaches that the Kingdom begins small and insignificant, but gradually (in history) becomes great. Again, we find no discontinuous, cataclysmic event interrupting history or affecting the growth of the Kingdom.

The Parable of the Yeast teaches the same principle. The good leaven of the Kingdom will grow and permeate everything until it dominates the entire loaf of the world. Some interpreters, especially dispensationalists hoping to put an apocalyptic construction on Jesus' parables, have argued that "leaven" represents evil, and in this parable, the world's infiltration of the Church.



This cannot be because it denies the very claims Jesus makes elsewhere concerning the Church (see Matthew 16:16-18). The true Church can never be infiltrated (2 Timothy 2:19). The institutional church may become worldly, but Jesus was not even thinking about the Church here. He is talking about the Kingdom of God and its success within human lives and institutions.

The truth of the matter is that "leaven" is a neutral term referring to a process of development and can be either good or evil depending on its usage. In Exodus 12:15 Israel is forbidden to use leaven in the Passover Supper on their departure from Egypt. Leaven, in this case, was evil because it represented the cultural influence of Egypt on Israel. But in Leviticus 23:17, the use of leaven in sacramental offerings to the Lord is enjoined. Why? Because Egypt was behind them, the Israelites could offer a cultural process "leavened" by the Law of the Covenant.

So in this parable, Jesus nowhere hints of an "evil Leaven". He is clearly teaching a lesson concerning the growth of the Kingdom. And in this setting, it is easy to see that Jesus taught that the principles of the Word of the Kingdom would fill the earth and prevail, as did the Prophets (Habakkuk 2:14).

The parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price again confirm that the principle subject of each parable is representative of the Kingdom.<sup>6</sup> As the leaven represented the Kingdom in the previous parable, so do the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price. Here Jesus explains that the value of the Kingdom is so great that it is to be coveted above all earthly possessions, and must be, if it is to be obtained.

The Parable of the Net teaches the certainty of judgment and the separation of the wicked from the righteous. The righteous will inherit the earth and the fullness thereof. The wicked will be disinherited and cast away as worthless fish.

These parables summarize Christ's eschatological expectations. There are other parables, especially in Matthew 25. But space does not permit an overview of each. However, they do confirm the ones here cited. It is important that the parables are permitted to state their truth about the nature and growth of the Kingdom, as the Ten Commandments do about morality. Christ's parables offer a paradigm to test our doctrine, especially our views on eschatology.

The outstanding features of these parables are twofold. One, history will be continuous until the final day; and two, the Kingdom is established by a gradual prevailing of the Word of God and not by some discontinuous and unrelated cataclysmic event.

God's Millennium will come and extend over all men and all social institutions. The state, family, school, and commerce-- all will be obediently governed by God's Law. It will not be a gigantic bureaucracy but a theocratic republic. Men and women who have become responsible, self-governing individuals will be delegated authority from Christ (Matthew 25:14-30). The Kingdom will not go to a particular race (the Jews), or to the strong, or to the brilliant, or to the wealthy, but to the holy. Such a kingdom of righteousness will be characterized by great spiritual and material blessings. The earth will be filled with peace and an increase in longevity will occur as the curse imposed in the Garden of Eden is greatly reduced.

It is an inescapable fact that we now live in the Kingdom Age-- we have always lived in the Kingdom Age. To deny it is to deny the sovereignty of God over history. It is to abandon the world to the devil and evil men. Those who walk by sight and not by faith do not see the hand of God in history. They only see the devil and his works. They wait for a physical return of Christ before He begins to manifest His reign in history. But according to Scripture, He has already begun to reign (1 Corinthians 15:25, cf. Acts 2:36). And He will continue to reign and make war against all enemies until peace and righteousness shall fill Heaven and Earth (Revelation 19).

#### AN OVERVIEW OF DIFFERING POSITIONS

Differing positions on eschatology are sometimes difficult to categorize, even in broad terms. Interpretations abound and confusion over definitions frequently occurs. For that reason, I have chosen to invent a couple of new terms that I hope will better assist us in understanding these different positions. I see two general eschatological models within Christendom as to how the triumph of the Kingdom of God will occur. Within these models, I see various schools of thought developed concerning the nature of the Millennium and the manner in which it will come. The origin of these views, as far as I know them, will be cited.

For a lack of better terms, I identify those eschatological models within Christendom as the Apocalyptic Model and the Soteriological Model. The Apocalyptic Model sees a cataclysmic end to history as necessary to usher in the Millennium of God's Kingdom at the second coming of Christ. The Soteriological Model does not claim to know how history will end, but does argue that the Millennium of God's Kingdom began at Christ's Ascension and continues to grow by virtue of the victory won by Christ at the Cross. It sees God redeeming human history.

Under the Apocalyptic Model are two schools of thought. They are the Futurists and the Historicists. Both schools are literalistic to a fault, The Futurists believe that much of Biblical prophecy, especially Revelation, has yet to be fulfilled. Futurists are generally Premillennialists (chiliasts) or dispensationalists. The Historicists believe that Biblical prophecy is a description of the progression of history. They believe that as history unfolds, prophecy unfolds. Historicists are generally amillennialist. Although there are very sharp differences between the Futurists and the Historicists over prophetic interpretation, they do hold to a pessimistic view of this age and look for a cataclysmic event to end history and to initiate the earthly reign of the Kingdom of God.

The Soteriological Model also has two schools of thought: the Preterist School and the Idealist School. Both schools tend to be symbolical and typological in their interpretation of the prophetic books. The Preterists see Biblical prophecy, especially Revelation, as predictive of the historical

period in which it was written. The Idealists perceive Biblical prophecy as a symbolic picture of the struggle between Christianity and paganism. Judgment day, according to this school, comes whenever a great moral issue is decided. Preterists and Idealists are generally postmillennialists and are not sharply disagreed as are the Futurists and Historicists.

It must be kept in mind that we are here discussing the manner in which the Kingdom of God is to triumph. We are not discussing the events following the general resurrection of the dead or the final judgment. All of these schools of thought believe in the resurrection of the dead, heaven and hell, and the second coming of Jesus.

The Apocalyptic Model can be ascribed with a Jewish origin during the post-exilic period. A perception had begun to dominate the Jewish mind immediately preceding the birth of Christ. And that was a feeling of helplessness and defeat. The Hebrew people saw themselves as incapable of establishing the Kingdom of God in space over time. (Keep in mind that in Jewish thinking, God's Kingdom was the same as a victorious Israel). Hence came the cry for a deliverer, a Messiah, who, with one cataclysmic blow, would subdue the power of Rome, conquer the nations, and restore the rule to Israel. History was at odds with Israel. Their only hope was for some cosmic superman to interrupt history with such an awesome, cataclysmic display of power that would virtually eliminate all opposition. It was a view that surrendered this present world to the devil. The next world would belong to God's people.

This view found some supporters in the Church during its early years, especially among Jewish converts. It was a premillennialism better known as chiliasm. Chiliasm affirmed that Christ would one day physically return to the earth to reign a thousand years. Some early leaders sympathized with chiliasm, such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian. But it also encountered many enemies because of its materialistic excesses. The Alexandrian Fathers such as Clement and Origen were the most prominent opponents.

The Apocalyptic Model has found its greatest advocacy in modern times with dispensationalism. Dispensationalism traces its origin to the Plymouth Brethren of the 19th century, along with the theory of a secret rapture of the Church before a seven-year tribulation period. It was first publicly introduced by a young Scottish prophetess by the name of Margaret MacDonald (1830). Reports say that the theory was quickly taken up and developed by J.N. Darby of the Plymouth Brethren who taught it extensively in the British Isles and the United States. The theory received little serious attention until C.I. Scofield popularized it through his Reference Bible published at the turn of the century.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike chiliasm, however, dispensationalism became a system of hermeneutics that began with a division of the human race into three classifications: the Jews, the Gentiles (non-Jews) and the Church. The god of this world (or age) was not Jehovah, but Satan. The Kingdom builders on Earth were not the Church, but the Jews. The Church belonged in Heaven. History consisted of different discontinuous periods called "dispensations". In each dispensation man is treated differently by God. For instance, there is a dispensation of law, a dispensation of grace and a dispensation of the kingdom. Under the dispensation of law, salvation came by ceremonial works. Under the dispensation of grace, salvation comes by accepting Jesus as the Savior. Under the dispensation of the kingdom, salvation comes by acquiescing to the new political order of the Messiah. Dispensationalists are also called members of the Jewish school because of their emphasis upon the Jew.

Historicists vehemently reject dispensationalism because of this terming of the Jews as "God's chosen people". Historicists belong to the corporate school that refuses to read this racial distinction into prophetic interpretation.

It is interesting to note that Historicism may have inadvertently been responsible for the revival of Futurism of which dispensationalism is a part. The Reformers of the 16th century were mostly Historicists, and from their prophetic interpretations, charged the Papacy with being Antichrist. This charge sent Roman theologians to their books for a reply because Augustinian predestination had been accepted by the Roman church until Aquinas. And it is upon Augustinian predestination that Historicism is based. There did appear to be striking similarities of Revelation 17 and the Roman church. The reply came from a Jesuit priest, Ribera, who articulated a futuristic interpretation to vindicate the Pope. He said that the Antichrist would not come until the future Great Tribulation.<sup>8</sup>

Amillennialism has traditionally been linked with Historicism. It began with Augustine when he equated the institutional church with the Kingdom of God. It was not a view that denied the Parousia or the Millennium; but it equated the reign of the institutional church with the Millennium and dated the Parousia at the last Day of Judgment. Protestant amillennialists have, of course, rejected the Roman Catholic Church; and therefore, do not see its triumph as synonymous with that of God's Kingdom. They redefine the Millennium to be the age of grace.

In spite of the many disagreements between the Futurists and Historicists, and in spite of the many variations within each school, the bottom line is that they all are Apocalyptic. They see this age as hopelessly and irretrievably lost. It belongs to the devil and there is no power big enough to take it away from him until Jesus returns with a cataclysmic display of power. The Gospel is a failure, at least in its declared objectives. Only a remnant will survive. We must be content to live along side of evil until God, by brute force, causes righteousness to triumph at the making of the New Heaven and New Earth.

As was noted earlier, the Apocalyptic Model was rejected by a number of prominent Early Fathers. In modern times it was rejected by Covenant theologians of the 17th through 19th centuries-- theologians such as Joseph Bellamy, Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Hopkins, Moses Stuart, and Charles Finney. Their postmillennial views foresaw a gradual and progressive triumph of the Kingdom of God in this world. The Church is not the Kingdom of God but is the militant part of it. It was a hope that placed great faith in the efficacy of the Atonement and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The second coming of Christ at the general resurrection would be a culmination of the Church's victory.

In conclusion, there are two basic models of eschatology in Christendom-- the Apocalyptic Model on the one hand and the Soteriological Model on the other. It is the purpose of this paper to refute the former and defend the latter.

## APOCALYPTIC DETERMINISM REFUTED

What is here meant by the term "determinism" in referring to the Apocalyptic Model is that it contains an ineradicable premise of necessity. Nothing can be done to change the course of history. Nothing can change the plan of God-- not even God. To change the plan would require changing God, and God would not be God if He could change. This viewpoint confuses the immutability of God's nature and character with His decree for Creation. The enforcement of sanctions depends upon man's moral condition, not some supposedly arbitrary "plan of God". In spite of some interesting semantic acrobatics to disguise the fact, the model smacks of fatalism.

Apocalyptic advocates, both Futurists and Historicists, openly admit their deterministic premise, however. We are made to understand by many such scholars that everything taking place now is a part of God's "perfect plan". God planned everything before the world even began, even sin. Ask any of them if this Great Tribulation or this Great Apostasy they talk about is necessary; and they will assuredly look at you in perplexity. The very amount of time and money spent on their graphs, charts, and timetables belie their faith in their deterministic assumptions. The failure of a Great Apostasy or Great Tribulation to materialize is, to them, unthinkable. If their activity were ever exposed to be futile speculations, it would be disastrous to their ministries.

Both Historicists and Futurists have been guilty of interpreting the Bible in the light of history, instead of the other way around. Their models are often very weak in predicting immediate future events; but significant historical events send them hastily to the Bible to force some text to fit the new situation, supposedly confirming their model. The formation of the new State of Israel in Palestine has provided a fertile field for many such speculations.

Two deterministic doctrines in Christian theology are used to support the Apocalyptic school. The Doctrine of Predestination by eternal decree is used to support Historicism. This doctrine sees God as the predeterminer and cause of all events in history-- both good and evil. Historicism requires this doctrine as its foundation because no other doctrine can validate the view that historical events, to their minutest detail, are fulfilling prophecy.

The Doctrine of Absolute Foreknowledge, separate from predestination, is used to support Futurism. Most Bible prophecy is assumed to be futuristic, occult to us, but known as a certainty to God.

Both doctrines are deterministic in their final analysis. For wherever you find certainty, you find necessity. Wherever you find necessity, you find determinism. And in eschatology, it is Apocalyptic Determinism.

The major fallacy contained in the Apocalyptic Model is its failure to understand God's true purpose in human history and to understand what has really gone wrong with the human race. It places greater importance on God's supposed plan than on His purpose. The means is greater than the end. This misplacement of priorities is evidenced when this question is posed: "If God were to succeed in bringing about a global revival, do you think He would still insist on judgment and punishment?" Few seem to have considered this possibility. Yet, we

would think that if the Atonement of Jesus Christ meant anything, God would be willing to relent His threat of punishment. But advocates of the Apocalyptic Model would precisely require this of God: to carry through with His plans for apostasy, tribulation, judgment, and punishment. Other such Bible scholars are expecting an unparalleled revival in the next few years and then the "rapture of the Church" as an arbitrary end to it all. It seems strange that God would bring such a good thing to a screeching halt. It certainly would not be a good tactical maneuver if He is sincere in His desire for the salvation of all mankind.

The deterministic premise requires a narrow view of man's endowments. Man is not perceived as a moral agent; therefore, man cannot act unless he is acted upon. Herein lays the apocalyptic perception of God's purpose: that it is not accomplished in what takes place *within* man but *to* man. It is the mechanics of manipulation, embracing various means of administration to conclude the phases of a predetermined game-plan. Man's purpose is somehow found in heaven standing around God's throne and shouting monotonous phrases of praise forever.

The Soteriological Model, however, looks back to the beginning to find God's original purpose. It would say that that purpose has not changed in spite of man's choice to the contrary. That original purpose was God and man living in community, enjoying happy God-to-man and man-to-man relationships. They were friendships in light of man's calling to subdue the earth and exercise godly dominion over it. The tragedy has been man's attempt to usurp God's throne and the resulting severance of relationships, both vertical and horizontal. The Bible is a record of God's effort to bring a restoration of these broken relationships and to re-establish man in his holy calling.

Apocalyptic determinism runs into difficulty both Biblically and philosophically. Philosophically speaking, it reduces God's personhood and man's personhood to a mechanistic view. Man is a robot made in the image of a gigantic computer in the sky. It fails to account for Christianity's assertion of cosmic personalism. If man is a person, then surely God is a person. And being a person requires the ability to change. Man has the ability to change his character, and so does God. We are confident, however, that God will not change His character because He is a totally self-conscious being; there is no hidden potential in God. But, man is not a totally self-conscious being; and that is the source of contingency as man discovers his hidden potentials. Those potentials man has are not hidden to God; but He has decreed that man should make the choices himself, and that no one else, not even God, should make them for him.<sup>9</sup>

The Biblical problems faced by apocalyptic determinism are those Scriptural passages that reveal God as being surprised, uncertain, and changing His mind. Examples of these situations would include: God's reaction to Abraham's willingness to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice in Genesis 22:12; God's grief and repenting over the sins of men prior to the Genesis Flood in 6:1-10; His shock at the depth of Israel's depravity in Isaiah 5:1-5 and Jeremiah 7:3; and God's uncertainty to impose sanctions in Hosea 11:8 which reads:

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?  
How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

There are a multitude of passages that reveal God as perplexed over what to do with sinful man. Although He has decreed the sanctions against sin, God still longs to offer pardon and restoration if there is hope of reformation. The contingency is not from God; it is from man. Man's choices cannot work a change in God's character, but they can work a change in what sanctions are imposed. To say that the above quoted passages and references are anthropopathic statements and that God really knew what these people were going to do, only confirms the assertion I just made. The Apocalyptic Model makes God less than a person because He cannot change. He cannot do anything new. He is just a gigantic, cosmic slot machine. After reading such moving passages as cited above, it would be hard to believe that God is only playing a game of manipulation and insincerely declaring His sentiments and intentions.

That this is a serious matter cannot be doubted. God has staked His very reputation on the line when He said with an oath:

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 33:11) NIV

But the Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

Historicism and Futurism see their processes as inevitable. The Historicist sees it as a result of a specific predestination of man's choices. The Futurist sees it, by absolute foreknowledge, as guidance by God of man's choices and the devil's choices. God has foreknown all things with absolute certainty. However, there is error in both doctrines.

The Scriptures do teach Divine Providence. God is near and is active in human history consistent with His moral government. Even the term "predestined" is used in Scripture; but it is an agricultural term denoting the process of preparation.<sup>10</sup> In Scripture the term is never used to mean the predestining of men's souls or their choices. It is used to describe the certainty of God's government-- that sanctions are certain and that God is ready to execute them, good and bad. So then, God's Providence acts in history in terms of His pure pose, man's choices and anticipation of man's choices.

The Scriptures do teach Divine Omniscience to include all that is possible in principle to know-- actual as actual, probable as probable, and possible as possible. Man's choices are not foreknown with absolute certainty because they do not exist as actualities but as possibilities. The Biblical term "foreknow" is a translation of the Greek word "prognosko". It is a medical term which meant to "predict the course of a disease based on the diagnosis". Of the seven times it is used in Scripture, five times it is used in reference to God and two times in reference to man. The conclusion that must be drawn is that the term "foreknow" (prognosko) is not absolute because man does not have absolute foreknowledge. But God does not have it either because the same word is used to describe God's foreknowledge.<sup>11</sup> The Doctrine of Absolute Foreknowledge is a doctrine finding its origin in theological tradition rather than Scriptural statements.

In the light of such findings (and there are many more) that God does not predestine men but laws and that He knows only what is possible in principle to know, it can easily be seen that judgment is not at all necessary. The necessity of judgment is based upon the premise of man's failure to repent (Revelation 9:20 & 2 Peter 3:9). Apocalyptic fatalism is unjustified and has a perverted view of history and of God's Kingdom. God has not given up on human history but has introduced three redemptive forces to bring restoration-- the Law, the Atonement, and the Holy Spirit.

#### A POSITIVE POSITION: THE SOTERIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

In refuting Apocalyptic Determinism, a new theological frontier opens for exploration. No longer are we tied down to the inevitability of human events. We once again have the opportunity to lift our eyes to our heavenly Father and honor Him with this new discovery. It becomes important for the Christian to construct a new model for history-- one that will not deny God the triumph of His purpose.

For some readers, my challenge of popular views of the end times seems shocking, even blasphemous. However, I counter their disapproval with the charge that they are prejudiced because of indoctrination. Because they have known no other position than the one in which they hold, they do not know how to read the Bible any other way and to intelligently critique contrary opinions. This is particularly difficult for dispensationalists.

This writer was once a dispensationalist, and as a dedicated dispensationalist, sought to faithfully work-out that system in interpreting the entire Bible. Researching particular passages revealed cracks in the model. The practice of dividing the Scriptures into those belonging to the Jew, others to the Gentiles, and still others to the Church was not holding up. Unaided by commentaries or reference books, I began to let the Scriptures interpret themselves. I found that they led me further away from my traditional beliefs. It seemed that pressing the model would make absurdities of some passages of Scripture.<sup>12</sup> I subsequently abandoned dispensationalism.

Having left dispensationalism, I wondered if the premillennial position was also invalid. The Scriptures soon led me to a dilemma. On the one hand, I found Christ, the triumphant King, sending out His Church to conquer with the promise comparable to what the Millennium is defined to be (Matthew 16:18; Luke 16:16,17). This would suggest a postmillennial viewpoint. On the other, I found warnings of grave and ominous disasters coming upon the Church and the world (Matthew 24 & 2 Thessalonians 2). This would suggest a premillennial viewpoint. We have the promise of victory, but also, the seeming promise of defeat. How can such an antinomy be resolved? Lazy thinkers will leave it as it is; but I do not believe



God is "the author of confusion". He does have an orderly plan of administration and it is up to the diligent to seek it out. Further Biblical research has led me to the following observations.

First, rigid eschatological models are unjustified. Scenarios described in the Bible are rarely universal or absolute. They only deal with small parts of God's economy and that in generalities. Rarely does a prophecy of one event determine the success or failure of another prediction.

An example would be found in a rather simple, yet specific (telic) prediction in Genesis 15:13. Here, God tells Abraham that his descendents would be servants in Egypt and would be mightily delivered in "400 years". Exodus 12:40 tells us that it took "430 years" before the people of Israel left Egypt. If God does not mind a near 10% tolerance of error in such a simple prophecy as this one, I wonder what kind of "tolerance" to expect in more complicated prophecies stated in often hidden symbols?<sup>13</sup> The point to be made here is that never do we find in Scripture an elaborate precision intended as we find it among modern chart-makers.

Second, this lack of precision must not be dismissed without an explanation; for it profoundly affects other doctrines. Four alternatives present themselves:

- 1) God does not know what He is doing;
- 2) Our present Bible is a corrupted text full of contradictions;
- 3) We do not know how to interpret the Bible;
- 4) Man's free will provides an uncertain contingency to some prophecy, thereby, making it conditional.

As a Christian believer, I must reject #1, doubt #2, entertain #3, and embrace #4. The last one appears to be the more probable alternative.

Third, the above conclusion can be verified by the numerous occasions God has changed His plans because men changed. We are not arguing from a philosophical base here, but a plainly Biblical one. The Prophet Jonah's experience with Nineveh is one example among many.<sup>14</sup> Here is a prophet making a classical prediction in the Name of the Lord. The greatest empire of his day, Assyria, and its capital, Nineveh, were going to be destroyed in forty days. The judgment is sealed and certain with no offers of amnesty. Nineveh repents in sackcloth and ashes. God rescinds the judgment. Jonah becomes angry; for he has been made to appear to be a false prophet. But Yahweh replies with an admonition to Jonah that as the moral Governor, it is He, Yahweh, who must make the final decision and that He is always desirous to spare the humble and penitent.

Fourth, this indicates that Biblical scenarios of the end times are based, at least in part, on the probable response of men to the gospel. At times, we find great optimism expressed that men will respond favorably (Luke 16:16,17; Matthew 16:18; Revelation 7:9,10;19:11-21). Other times, a feeling of pessimism can be found as in Luke 18:8 and Matthew 7:14. God appears to be hoping for the best but preparing for the worst.

Fifth, God must not be so fond of His plans for punishment and destruction, if He would be willing to change them for those means which will better secure His purpose. If restoring relationships is His purpose, then judgment would be the very last consideration; for it removes all hope of reconciliation. (See 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 and Ezekiel 18:30-32)

Sixth, God does not easily give up on accomplishing His purpose. For He is "slow to anger and abounding in love" (Psalms 103:8). Even if there is only one righteous person in all the earth (as in the case of Noah), there is still hope for reconciliation and a fulfillment of God's purpose in human history. He will not end it all. God still has His "7000 who have not bowed their knees to Baal"-- even today.

Seventh, if God was willing to take thousands of years to plan and execute the glorious Atonement of Jesus, He is surely willing to spend thousands of years applying it and carrying through with its glorious implications. He has spent two thousand years thusfar.<sup>15</sup>

Eighth, God's two great provisions-- the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit-- are sufficient to bring the triumph of the Kingdom on Earth (see the next chapter). The King is reigning now because His Word has the force of Law and the ministry of the Holy Spirit is a sanction of blessing confirming its validity.<sup>16</sup>

Ninth, it appears that God has great faith in what the Gospel can do (John 12:32). The Book of Acts appears to justify His optimism. Dangers feared by Paul lie in the misrepresentation of the Gospel by false teachers and not the Gospel itself. If the Gospel can be presented forcefully and accurately, fruit can be expected in time (Mark 4:26-29).

Tenth, it is unbiblical to divide the human race into three categories of Church, Gentile, and Jew. God will not and has never intended to give the Kingdom to a race irrespective of their moral condition. The concept that the Kingdom belongs to the Jewish race was an invention of the Pharisees. Such racism was soundly condemned by John the Baptist, Jesus and the Apostle Paul. The Kingdom will be given to the holy (Luke 3:8,9).

Yet, it is upon this very distinction that dispensationalism rests. The dispensational view will come crashing down if this distinction is removed. Many, indeed, have cited the return of the Jews to Palestine as the crowning confirmation of their eschatological expectations. However, Jewish claims to the Kingdom have been rejected by Christ Himself:

Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed. (Matthew 21:43,44) NIV

The Jews can no longer expect to be a part of the Kingdom unless they become a Christian nation.

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. (Galatians 3:14) NIV

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)

Such passages as quoted above compel the conclusion that the New Testament is a reinterpretation of the Old Testament to make the Church the New Israel, Christ, the New David,<sup>17</sup> who rules on Earth through the Church, the New Israel,<sup>18</sup> from His throne in Heaven, the New Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup>

Again, we find two views in conflict within the Church over Biblical prophecy. On the one hand, there stands the Soteriological interpretation whose advocates include Covenant theologians. And then there is the Apocalyptic interpretation dominated by Pietist theologians.<sup>20</sup> The Soteriological interpretation sees a definite contest to bring about man's salvation and history as an opportunity to restore broken relationships. The Apocalyptic interpretation sees salvation as only a technicality that takes place in the mind of God and history as a cosmic chess game.

The concept behind the Soteriological Model adds the perception of a genuine conflict taking place in the universe. This cosmic struggle is not a gigantic chess game to entertain the Trinity. A voluntary rebellion has occurred on the part of free moral agents. God has responded with sanctions against the usurpers to isolate their anarchy and to incarcerate them in the chains of darkness. The consequences for obedience continue to favor the righteous and prosper them as a general rule.

The Soteriological Model can foresee the possibility of cycles in history or to put it Biblically-- "the shaking of the nations".<sup>21</sup> But it also sees that each cycle has pushed mankind further along a linear path. In other words, despite the reality of cultural progress and subsequent retrogression, God has managed to push the human race towards ultimate restoration. History is teleological.

The assertion of teleology in history requires a distinction to be drawn between postmillennialists that are Old School theologians and New School theologians. Although they are both teleological, the Old School holds to a stricter linear view of history, whereas the New School allows for cycles and definite setbacks in history. The Old School will sometimes see a useful purpose in sin and evil. The New School rejects that view and accepts it that there are irredeemable aspects in the universe and that sin can only result in unmingled evil and misery.

However, both Old School and New School are agreed that the rule of Christ with His saints on the earth has already begun. His Kingdom is an expansionist Kingdom in conflict with the Kingdom of Satan. The New School will go on to say that there have been advances and retreats; the conflict continues, but we are winning. Each person, place, and thing that comes under the reign of Christ extends His Kingdom, The enemies of Christ who refuse to renounce their rebellion will face judgment by being physically removed; whether it is by military invasion, economic and political breakdown, insanity, or death.<sup>22</sup>

This assertion is precisely the point of the Book of Revelation. In that book the warrior-king, Jesus Christ, continues to make war on His enemies: First, by tenderly offering amnesty and liberty to all penitent rebels and second, by executing the impenitent. This process can be demonstrated in history. The first ethnic group to receive the calling was the Jews. They rejected Christ and were judged and nearly annihilated at the razing of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (see Revelation 5-11). The second group was the nations of the Roman Empire. They rejected true Christianity and were destroyed by the Barbarians in the fifth century (see Revelation 13-19).<sup>23</sup> This has been the pattern of history depicted by John in Revelation. And this will be the pattern of God's government of the nations until all dominion and power shall be put under the feet of Christ.

New School postmillennialism is Preterist when interpreting such books as Daniel and Revelation. It would see the Book of Daniel as already fulfilled during the Maccabean period and Christ's first coming. It would interpret Revelation as already largely fulfilled. Chapters 5-12 were fulfilled at the destruction of Judaism and chapters 13-19 were fulfilled at the fall of Rome.<sup>24</sup>

New School postmillennialism would also be Idealist in its interpretation of Daniel and Revelation because it sees the concrete historical predictions they make as types for the progression of the Kingdom of God-- the shaking of the nations until "that which cannot be shaken may remain" (Hebrews 12:27 & Ezekiel 21:27).<sup>25</sup>

New School postmillennialism embraces Moral Government Theology which is firmly rooted in Covenant Theology. Old School postmillennialism holds to the old Puritan form of Covenant Theology. Moral Government Theology teaches the present reign of Christ through persuasion and sanctions, not causation and sanctions as do the Old Schoolers. It is non-deterministic because it rejects the predestination of man's choices as normal in God's Kingdom and rejects the Doctrine of Absolute Foreknowledge of man's choices (see Appendix A).

When will Jesus return? That is a question that no one can answer from a Biblical point of view. Numerous interpreters cite various aspects of our turbulent age as indicators of the Lord's soon return. But Jesus Himself stated that the false signs of His coming are those events of catastrophic nature (Matthew 24:7-13). They are only the characteristics of an age in conflict. True signs of our Lord's return have to do with the mission of the Church on Earth, whether it succeeds or fails in the ministry of reconciliation. Jesus only offers Matthew 24:14 as the only clear, yet indefinite, sign of the end and the coming of the Lord. This may be why the parables in Matthew 25 indicate a long tarrying before our Lord's return. I can see at least five, Biblical reasons why we should not expect the soon return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

First, the world has not been evangelized according to Mark 13:10 and Matthew 24:14. Evidence exists that upwards to 700 tribes and languages have yet to hear the gospel message or receive a Bible. In the approximation of two billion people have yet to hear the name of Jesus.<sup>26</sup> The Apostle Paul taught in Romans 10:14 that "How can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" I think that we have steadfast promises that God will not judge the entire earth until the entire earth has heard.

Second, the nations have not been discipled; that is, they have not been Christianized according to Matthew 28:18-20. Evangelization is not enough; else the Church's work would already be finished. It appears that Paul believed the Gospel had gone to the world toward the end of his lifetime (Colossians 1:6 & 23). But Jesus did not come back; so the Great Commission must mean more than evangelization. It means discipleship. Some have supposed that a nation cannot be "Christian" unless the minimum of a majority of its people are Christians. That is an inaccurate perception because even Christ must "rule with an iron scepter". A nation is Christian if it is effectively governed according to Biblical Law. This was Christ's Great Commission, His last mandate to His disciples. They were called to make men Christian in their hearts and their institutions. It is difficult to believe that Christ would issue such a calling and then permit us to leave with our work half done.

Third, the Church has not yet been perfected according to Ephesians 4:11-14. Small wonder the above two callings have yet to be accomplished; the Church continues to be impotent and immature. Paul declares in this passage that the five-fold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers would continue until the Church was perfected and completed, measuring to the full stature of Christ. Today, we need those ministries more than ever. The Church "is being tossed about by every wind of doctrine". Christ will only return when His "bride hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7,8). Postmillennialists believe that the Church cannot inherit the ultimate blessing until it is mature enough to face the ultimate test.

Fourth, the Jews do not welcome those who come in the Name of the Lord, according to Matthew 23:39. The Jews continue to be the persecutors of Christ and of His Church. Indeed, they were the first "antichrists". Who insists that Christmas scenes be removed from public places? Who but the Jews reject the claims of the Savior? The Moslems despise Christendom, but at least they honor Christ as a great prophet. The Jews scorn Him. *Jesus* promised that they would not see Him again until they could bless Him. Modern Israel persecutes Christian missionaries. Do you think God will bless those who curse His Son? He certainly will not (Philippians 2:9-11 and Psalms 2). Unless the Jews embrace Christ, they may soon be driven again from Palestine. Paul mourned over Israel's stubbornness, but believed they would someday see the truth and be saved. But they would first have to be provoked to jealousy-- that is, they would need to see the Church receiving the blessings of the Kingdom promised to Abraham and the Messiah (Romans 11:11, 15, 23,25,26). This prophecy will be fulfilled when the Church succeeds in its godly dominion and secures the material blessings of the Kingdom, as well as the spiritual blessings.

Fifth, Christ's coming will be accompanied by judgment terminating the offer of pardon. "God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Although America continues to wallow in its own filth, spiritual awakenings abound on the mission field. These happy events have surely moved the heart of God to postpone "the Last Day". Revelation 9 teaches that God's wrath is poured out when man's hardness leaves him unredeemable-- he refuses to repent. God can no longer treat man as an object of His mercy but must destroy *him* as an enemy because of his refusal to repent when disciplined as a son (Hebrews 12:7,8). But the sweet sounds of the Gospel still find eager listeners today. As long as this revival continues, we need not expect God to end it.

The value of the Soteriological Model, as opposed to the Apocalyptic Model, lies in its flexibility. The Apocalyptic Model requires precision and exact and arbitrary fulfillment of prophecies to the minutest detail. The Soteriological Model does not require this of God. It permits God to be the Sovereign Lord that He is. It recognizes His right to change His mind and to execute a more effective course of action that will best secure His moral Government. This is cosmic personalism.

It is clear that the Apocalyptic Model is wholly inadequate. It fails to recognize the general nature of prophecy-- to warn of judgment and to persuade men to repent. This failure subjects Biblical passages to being used out of their historical context. A case in point would be the Book of Revelation. Here, the Apostle is clearly addressing his visions to seven specific churches of his day. "Surely, I come quickly" is the resounding theme of the book. That John or Jesus, for that matter, would have made such statements with a two thousand-year scenario in mind would have at best been nearsighted, at worst, deceptive.

A correct interpretation of Revelation will recognize it as a book largely fulfilled early in Church history; and in a general sense, describing the manner in which God governs the nations. It would recognize it as a book full of meaningful imagery, but as symbolism that should not be pressed too specifically.

The Book of Jonah stands as a formidable prophetic writing in support of the Soteriological Model. Its lesson is that the great Yahweh is the moral Governor who makes the final decision to punish or to pardon. He is always desirous to spare the humble and the penitent.

The Soteriological Model does not disparage God's intelligence or ability. Quite the contrary, God is seen as the all-competent moral Governor of the universe, who is able to impose sanctions in a personal manner to all of His creation and not in a robot-like reaction to man's choices. God does have a plan, a plan so complicated that no mortal mind could comprehend it in its detail. The real problem with the Apocalyptic Model is its quest for the fast and easy answer. It is too simplistic, even juvenile. It largely concerns itself with the petty and selfish dreams of mansions, golden streets, and painless bodies. It does not even consider the immensity of God's Kingdom and all of the variables that are involved in bringing about the highest wellbeing of God and the universe.

The Soteriological Model recognizes that God has a plan, but makes no pretensions to comprehend it. It only keeps a single eye on God's purpose and an earnest dedication to the Great Commission and a humble acceptance of Christ's admonition to His disciples that "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath placed in His own power" (Acts 1:7).

## THE TRIUMPH OF THE KINGDOM

The bottom line in formulating our eschatological expectations lies in that purpose which God is seeking to accomplish in human history. To understand God's purpose clearly, one must return to the beginning of creation.

In Genesis chapter one, we find that human history begins, not with man, but with God. Human history is a theocentric history that begins with God's purpose for all of His creation, including man. It quickly appears, by reading the narrative, that God created the terrestrial universe for man: for his exploration, his dominion, and his enjoyment. In chapter 1:26-30 and 2:15, we find the issuance of the Cultural Mandate. It was a covenant that promised life for obedience and death for disobedience. Covenant man was called to do four basic things:

First, he was called to be fruitful, which meant that man was to be a blessing to the rest of God's universe by righteous living.

Second, he was to multiply; that is, he was to increase the numbers of covenant people. (At first done by procreation, but now by procreation and evangelism).

Third, he was to subdue the earth. He was to master the secrets of God's creation by learning its properties (physical laws) and potentials.

Fourth, he was called to exercise godly dominion over the creation which meant that he was to wisely use its resources in building civilization and fulfilling human needs.

God envisioned a world full of righteous persons like Himself, enjoying Him and the universe He had created. It was to be the happy world of man living at peace with his environment, and in community, enjoying the work of his calling. This included meaningful fellowship with his neighbors and a reverent communion with his Creator. If a person can understand the desire felt by man and wife to bless the other with a child, then one can begin to understand and appreciate the love that filled God's heart as He dreamed this noble dream.

That dream was shattered, however, as man broke the relationships that tied him to his Maker and his fellowman. His sin was for violating his design in renouncing his calling. By declaring war against his Maker in the attempt to deify himself (Genesis 3:5), man also declared war against nature, against his neighbor, and even against himself. His selfishness turned into a moral insanity (see Romans 1).

God sought to restrain man's selfishness by imposing a curse upon nature that would make work more difficult and time-consuming for man (Genesis 3:17). It was a disciplinary measure intended to awaken man to his foolish pride and his suicidal course. Although the curse made its fulfillment more difficult, man's calling was not nullified because man is fitted for nothing else. Such nullification is precisely what man wanted. That God would be unswerving in His purpose at this critical point in human history perfectly illustrates God's intention to institute a strategy for restoration.<sup>27</sup>

The Bible narrates the story of God's endeavor to bring a restoration of the Kingdom of God on Earth. It has not been easy and there have been some serious setbacks, but never has defeat threatened except in the case of Noah's generation. Never has God had to change the rules in order to win. The moral law has never changed to be more permissive. Even in the darkest times under the Old Covenant, God was able to score decisive victories against the usurpers.

You see, during the Old Testament times, God *was* also fighting a major conflict in Heaven. Satan was leading a rebellion among God's angelic host and myriads of them were defecting to Satan's camp (Revelation 12:7-12). Why? Because there was an argument in heaven over what should be done with rebellious man. Satan, the Accuser, appears to have argued that retributive justice should be immediately imposed for man's sin. God's reluctance to impose the penalty and to offer a pardon was interpreted to be a weakness in God to govern. In enhancing his position, Satan could well have argued like this: "Man cannot be trusted. Every time God gives him a chance, he gets worse. God is too gullible and does not have the proper disposition to govern. He freezes whenever things get out of hand and almost waits until its too late to do anything about it. I should be moral governor. I may not be all powerful, but I will sure use what power I've got to beat man back into line or eliminate him. Any of you angels willing to give me a hand? I am going to need help you know." Satan was using God's forbearance as an excuse to establish a kingdom of his own.

But God was not to be fooled. He had a higher purpose for what He was doing. He wanted a kingdom founded on disinterested benevolence (love), not selfish fear. (See 2 Corinthians 5:15 cf. Matthew 5:43-48). Although God had faithfully imposed the sanctions of His moral law against sin to the satisfaction of public justice, He also scored famous victories in history that justified pursuing His original purpose. That Hall of Fame included Noah, who served God even when the rest of the world did not. There was Abraham who proved that men would trust God even if He seemed to act out of character. (The angels had not even done that). Then there was Job who proved that men do not have to serve God for what they can get out of Him but because He is worthy.<sup>29</sup>

Defections continued to Satan's side; but the momentum was turning against him. God's victories had been formidable. Satan was being exposed as a tyrant who only compounded the horror of sin. And while Satan was establishing his pagan empires on the earth, God was using Satan to prepare for the most devastating blow yet. It was a blow that would spell the ruin of Satan's kingdom in Heaven and on Earth. God, Himself, was going to invade human history as a man.

At the darkest time in man's history, the Bright Star appeared in the East. The consummation of the celestial and terrestrial conflict was near at hand. The Prince of Righteousness had come.

The conflict intensifies as the Prince of Heaven and the Prince of Hell meet face to face. The innocent Lamb of God is tempted and abused by the one who claims to be a better governor than He. Satan's wickedness is displayed for all to see.<sup>30</sup> And on Golgotha's brow, as the Prince of Glory hangs between Heaven and Earth and as Satan unleashes his flooding hatred, the heart of God is laid bare before the hosts of His Creation. God's broken heart over sin, its utter vileness, and the justice of God's decrees-- all send a crushing blow to the selfishness of man. In Hades, Christ is pronounced innocent and Satan to be guilty.<sup>31</sup>



The keys of authority are taken from him and are given to Christ who is raised to life, power, and glory to assume His throne in heaven.<sup>32</sup>

Much can be said concerning the sacred Atonement of Jesus Christ. Its implications are so far-reaching that volumes can and should be written to describe them further. But in summary, it can be said that Christ leveled the kingdom of Satan. He resolved the governmental problems God had in forgiving man and He broke the power of sin and death. He abolished the Curse by rising from the dead as the Second Adam. The stage is now set for an even greater display of Christ's triumph.

As Christ leaves His little band of followers to take His throne, He reiterates the Cultural Mandate in the form of the Great Commission. He promises to send the power to be witnesses of His Sovereignty in the person of the Holy Spirit. But what was to be the extent of their success?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:16-19)

Perhaps the most stunning prophecy Jesus ever made concerning His Church was this one: "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". It should be now clear that Jesus intended to do far more through the Church than is commonly supposed. "The world lies in the lap of the wicked one", said the Apostle John. But that is not to mean it must stay that way. Human history has now been personally invaded by two members of the Trinity. The Second Person, God the Son, has "destroyed the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8) and "has led captivity captive" (Ephesians 4:8). The dominion of Satan is being spoiled (plundered) because the "strongman of the house" (Mark 3:27) has been bound through the glorious triumph of Christ's Atonement (Revelation 20:1,2).

"All power has been given unto me in heaven and on earth", He said. "Behold, I give you power over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). Christ has called His Church to demonstrate His victory over Satan's kingdom. The Third Person, God the Holy Spirit, has "endued (us) with power from on high." Now we have not only the authority "to bind and to loose", but the power to execute it as well. Revelation 12 explains that there was once war in Heaven. Satan and his followers have been cast out by virtue of Christ's Atonement. As the angels of Heaven drove Satan out of Heaven and into the earth, so the Church has been called to drive Satan and his wicked followers out of Earth and into hell.

So strange must be the cries that God hears calling upon Him to rescue and rapture the Church out of this world. So many act as if there had been no Atonement. They think it only bought them a mansion in Heaven and a seat at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. They have surrendered the world and a large portion of the Church to the devil. Only a remnant will survive. They are final outpost Christians. The armies of Satan are marching on. "Hold the Fort!", they cry, "Jesus will return to rescue us at any moment." What a pity.

Jesus said that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church. Gates are defensive weapons to hold out the enemy. Jesus did not say that at the end of the world His Church would be held up in a fort somewhere. To the contrary, the forces of Satan will be driven to hell as a marching Church takes over the world. Christ has called His people to do exploits and to make excursions into the enemy's territory (Daniel 11:32). He has even called us to break down "the gates of hell" itself-- Satan's final fortress. "The kingdom (has been) delivered to the saints of the Most High."

So, you see that God intends much more than to get a bunch of rebellious sinners to agree to go in the Rapture. God wants to restore His Kingdom on Earth and in history, not through some discontinuous and unrelated, cataclysmic event. It is not like God to declare war and then put his people on the battlefield only to be massacred. He intends to do exactly what He has called us to do-- break down the gates of hell.

### THE KINGDOM AND THE MILLENNIUM

Attention will now be directed to those passages that have clear reference to the "Millennium" and to the nature of Christ's Kingdom when it shall have prevailed in the earth.

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection:  
on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests  
of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

(Revelation 20:6)

The twentieth chapter of Revelation is the setting for the only direct reference to what has been called the "Millennium" or "1000-year Reign of Christ". Description of that period is lacking in this passage except that it will be a period when Christ rules the earth with His saints. It appears that the period is characterized by a prevailing of the truth due to the binding of Satan. There is no utopian description of the period. It only refers to the form of government and the measure of success in propagating the truth.

In a highly symbolical book where the clothes people wear represent their righteousness (19:8), where a sword comes out of the mouth of Christ to represent the function of the Word of God (19:15), and where a mighty angel (Satan) is depicted as a dragon (20:2), care should be taken in deciding to what the 1000-year period and the First Resurrection has reference to. Revelation is a book that is fond of using numbers of perfection such as 7, 12, 144,000. Is it fair to conclude then that 1000 years is here meant to represent a very long and fruitful period of righteousness? I think so. I think it is representative of a perfect period of theocratic government and not necessarily a literal 1000-year period. It may appear that John is also teaching a doctrine of two resurrections separated from each other by the thousand-year period. This is the only place it is taught in the Bible. Jesus did not teach it. On the contrary, He taught one, final judgment at the general resurrection (John 6:39-44; 11:23-26; 12:48). So, we must conclude that this descriptive passage is symbolic. There are two kinds of descriptive passages in the Bible: historical narrative and didactic metaphor. The Book of Revelation is primarily didactic metaphor, which means that its imagery is not concerned with describing an historical happening (narrative) but is intended to use metaphor to teach doctrine. The interpretation of descriptive passages must be subordinated (or reinterpreted) to fit the doctrinal passages of the Bible. All descriptive passages must be interpreted in the light of the doctrinal passages, especially those of our Savior's.

Revelation 22:19 seems to confirm that Christians will be present at the "Great White Throne" judgment when the Book of Life will be opened to sanction the entrance of the righteous to the "new heaven and new earth". Strange that they should be judged twice unless John intends the First Resurrection to symbolize something like the resurrection that neutralizes the power of the "second death". Perhaps, he is here referring to the death, burial and resurrection that takes place at conversion (John 3:1ff, Romans 6:1ff, Ephesians 2:1ff). This is a real possibility, and is the customary interpretation by most postmillennialists. But another interpretation is possible, one that deals with some otherwise inexplicable passages. In Daniel 12:1-3 we find these words:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. (KJV)

My assertion is that this prophecy has already been fulfilled. In Revelation 12:7 we find the fulfillment of vs. 1, the victory of Michael. Verse two was fulfilled in Matthew 27:52 & 53, which reads,

And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. (KJV)

Note the similar wording in both Daniel and Matthew, especially the words "many" and "sleep/slept". Could it be that the First Resurrection has already occurred in a literal sense? If not, why did Michael contend with the devil for the body of Moses in Jude 9? And why did Jesus preach to "the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:19) if not to fulfill Daniel 12:2(b)? There is enough evidence to make this interpretation plausible. But it must be left to a better scholar than I to test its validity.

The gathering of Gog and Magog takes place at the conclusion of the Kingdom Age as depicted in Revelation 20. However, in Ezekiel, where undoubtedly the imagery is drawn, it takes place prior to the Kingdom Age (Ezekiel 39). Unless we choose to believe that the Bible is a self-contradictory book, it should be clear that chronology is not intended to be conveyed but doctrine.<sup>33</sup>

Again, it must be remembered that this book is highly symbolic, with much typology. Sweeping doctrines should not be based upon Revelation alone, especially if a literalistic interpretation contradicts other books.

It is clear that the Scriptures teach that the Kingdom of God is on Earth now. We are living in the Kingdom Age or the Millennium. The Kingdom has not triumphed over the usurpers in totality; but it is progressing towards that goal.

The following analysis attempts to describe the nature of the Kingdom Age.

- 1) God through Christ will be King: Isaiah 9:6 (1 Corinthians 15:22-28)
- 2) On Earth, He will reign through His Saints: Daniel 7:13 (cf. Acts 1:9); 7:27; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 1:6; 5:9-14
- 3) Accompanied by a New Covenant-- the writing of the moral law upon the heart: Hebrews 12:24; 10:16

- 4) The Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh: Isaiah 32:15; Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28; John 14:16,17; Acts 2
- 5) The Knowledge of the Lord fills the Earth: Habakkuk 2:14 (cf. Isaiah 42:3); Colossians 1:23; 1 John 2:27; Luke 24:45-48; Hebrews 8:11; Revelation 14:6
- 6) A Kingdom of Righteousness: Psalms 45:6; Matthew 6:33
- 7) A Kingdom of Peace-- war abolished: Psalms 46:9; Isaiah 2:4; 9:7; 32:15; Micah 4:1
- 8) The Curse to be lifted: Isaiah 32:13,15
  - a. All wild animals domesticated (Isaiah 11:6,9)
  - b. Rainfall and sunlight plentiful (Isaiah 30:26; 32:15; 35:6,7)
  - c. Abundant crops (Amos 9:13; Psalms 72:16)
  - d. Wilderness blossoms (Isaiah 35:1)
  - e. Unprecedented prosperity (Micah 4:4)
  - f. Population increase (Ezekiel 36:38)
  - g. Health and Longevity (Isaiah 35:5,6; 65:22)

The reader is also referred to the Book of Deuteronomy where these very promises are given to the righteous nation that is obedient to the commandments of God. It is clear that events of cosmological significance are not necessary beyond what has already been secured through the Atonement. The Millennium appears to be simply that time in human history when God may bless like He could have and would have done for ancient Israel, except now on a global scale.

- 9) The wicked are removed from the earth by being converted, disinherited, incarcerated or executed: Proverbs 2:22; Psalms 104:35; 37:38; 52:5; Psalms 1 cf. Revelation 19:11-21 cf. Psalms 2
- 10) Satan is bound: Isaiah 24:21,22; Revelation 20:1-3; Matthew 16:19; Luke 10:19; Mark 3:27
- 11) The Earth becomes a place of singing: Isaiah 14:7; 55:12; 1 Peter 1:8
- 12) Language becomes Christian, reversing Babel: Zephaniah 3:9
- 13) The Manner of its Coming: Luke 17:20  
This passage is of special importance; for it addresses the very question discussed by this essay.

verse 21-- Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say, 'Here it is' or 'There it is' because the Kingdom of God is within you." (NIV)

If this passage does not settle the question, I do not know what will. The Apocalyptic school would have us scurrying about and looking in the sky, awaiting a great cataclysmic introduction of the Kingdom of God. The truth of the matter is that it has already come into the hearts of men and will grow gradually in history. As Righteous men and women begin to externalize what is in their hearts, the Kingdom begins to extend its dominion.

It is certain that the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ has ushered in all the authority and power to the sons of God necessary to their calling. That calling is to bring the world under the dominion of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). Success in that endeavor has promised the "Sabbath" of the Kingdom in bountiful blessing to all mankind (Hebrews 4:9-11).

## THE PATTERN OF GOD'S JUDGMENT: A CASE STUDY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

If the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that God is a judge, the Supreme Judge of the universe. The Scriptures promise that there will be a final day of judgment before the Great White Throne of God. That judgment will settle unfinished justice, all the inequities of history. Then the eternity of perfection will come (Revelation 20:11-15).

The Holy Scriptures also teach that God is the judge in history. It seems that the Bible constantly is confronting man with God the Judge in History. A denial of the Bible's testimony of this truth is nothing short of a denial of the sovereignty of God; it is a practical deism. God's judgment in history through providential government is incidental to the quest of restoration, eliminating the ungodly that stand in opposition to God's purposes. Man's attempt to frustrate God's endeavor is in turn frustrated (Psalms 1). The Apostle Paul appears to confirm that there are two kinds of judgment: one in history and one to end history (1 Timothy 5:24,25).

In the Old Testament there was a shaking of the nations, as God's Kingdom marched on to victory (Ezekiel 21:26,27). In the New Testament age, the present one, God promises to shake the nations again until only Christ's Kingdom remains (Haggai 2:6, cf. Hebrews 12:26). This judgment in history is incidental because it is not intended to settle unfinished justice. It is intended to be those providential acts of the redemption of God's people from the oppression of the ungodly. When the wicked are judged and removed, the righteous are strengthened and begin to take hold of their inheritance. This shaking or judging in history will continue until "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14)

Central to this judgment in history are the people of God. The wicked nations are not judged upon their own merits, only in terms of their response and treatment of the righteous (Genesis 12:3, cf. Matthew 18:18). Events in history are shaped by the faithfulness and the unfaithfulness of God's people. A study of ancient Israel is profitable in this regard, to understand the pattern of God's judgment in His moral government.

In the Book of Judges we find the monotony of the blessing-cursing cycle. Righteousness leads to material prosperity, which in turn, leads to apostasy, then judgment, repentance, and finally restoration. There was little stability in the spiritual commitment of Israel. Yahweh was forced, on numerous occasions, to discipline His children.

However, it appears that from the time of Moses' death on, God knew He would have to eventually drive Israel out of the land He was about to give them (Deuteronomy 31:17,27). God's hopes were not high because Israel was wicked in the presence of *Moses*; how much more after his death! The Incarnation and the Atonement were beginning to loom with greater anticipancy in the mind of God. But He was not ready for such an ambitious endeavor until His use of Israel was completed.

The purpose of this study is very practical and relevant. America stands in the "valley of decision" and faces divine judgment. The faithful seek the wisdom of God to understand when a nation has reached a point of no return. They seek to know when and upon what conditions God seals a nation for judgment. They also seek to know the manner of His judgment and to understand their duty. Our only source for such counsel lies in Scripture, especially the experience of the apostate nation of ancient Israel.

In Jeremiah 3:8 we find that God has divorced Israel to send them into exile. In Jeremiah 7:14 God rejects the City of Jerusalem as the City of the Great King. He removes His presence, never to return until the Pentecost found in Acts 2 that ushers in the New Covenant. Even then, the temple is rejected. God's new temple has become the bodies of His people (2 Corinthians 6:16). His Jerusalem has become the Church Triumphant (Galatians 4:21).

The removal of God's presence from Jerusalem in Ezekiel 10 (contemporary of Jeremiah) seals it for judgment. Yahweh's protective covering is removed. He will no longer treat them as sons but destroy them as enemies. The end was imminent.

Upon what circumstances will God seal a nation for judgment? At that point where it is incapable of responding to grace. The people have developed such a propensity to sin that they have virtually destroyed their moral agency. They have become irredeemable-- reprobate.

There is a period of time when the prayers of the righteous are efficacious for the nation in saving it from wrath collectively (Ezekiel 22:30). The process of restoration to the favor of God begins only as the nation turns from its wickedness (2 Chronicles 7:14). However, if the righteous are too few and too weak, such that they cannot take possession of the nations governing institutions, it is too late. Their prayers for the nation will be futile. They will only be able to save themselves (Ezekiel 14:12-23).

The prophet Ezekiel prophesied in captivity during the time Jeremiah was prophesying in Jerusalem. In Ezekiel 22 we find the following Indictment brought against Jerusalem which seals it for judgment:

- 1) Wickedness is condoned by public policy:
  - a. Bloodshed (murder)-- public policy does not punish the guilty (including abortionists) vs. 3,4
  - b. Idolatry-- the making of persons or things objects of worship or veneration (also cultism and witchcraft) vs. 3,4
  - c. Corruption among public officials to secure and maintain their powers without regard to human rights-- tyranny and conspiracy vs.6,25
  - d. Contempt for parental authority by children and the state-- dissolution of family government vs. 7
  - e. Oppression of foreigners, orphans, widows, and the poor-- oppressive tax and inheritance laws, etc. vs. 7
  - f. Criminal abuse and distortion of money-credit system (inflation) vs. 12
  - g. Slander-- gossip: abuse of the reputation of others (envy) vs. 9
  - h. Ignoring the sanctity of God's name vs. 8 and Hosea 4:2

- i. Ignoring the purpose and sanctity of the Sabbath vs. 8
- j. Incest and other sexual perversions left unpunished vs. 9-11
- k. Bribery for murder-- organized crime vs. 12
- l. Adultery (divorce) vs. 11, Hosea 4:2
- m. No fear of God but of man and nature; the sovereignty of God forgotten Hosea 4:1-3

A nation becomes guilty of the above crimes in the collective sense when it no longer effectively punishes them through its criminal-justice system or fails to condemn it through public tradition. (See Deuteronomy 13:12-16; 21:1-9; 27:26). America has become guilty of all the above crimes in the collective sense. It no longer punishes sin but often condones it.

Now continuing:

- 2) The institutional church is no longer controlled by the godly but by antinomian pastors vs. 26
- 3) The institutional church no longer raises its voice to cry against wickedness. A rise of pluralistic neutrality among prominent clergy-men blinds them to national crimes vs. 28
- 4) The knowledge of redemption and restoration is either unknown or too difficult to find-- caused by the ignorance of God's law through false theologies. Church education ignores God's law Hosea 4:6 & Jeremiah 5:4,5
- 5) The godly are poorly taught in God's law and are ignorant in the means of saving the nation Amos 8:10-12
- 6) Ignorance and prejudice brings the ostracizing of the wise and a rejection of their testimony by the church and society Hosea 9:7; Matthew 23:29-31; 2 Timothy 4:3,4
- 7) The church and society credit their suffering to a cause other than the rejection of God's law Jeremiah 4k:15-19

When such conditions as cited here occur in a nation, its end is near. Such was the experience of ancient Israel; and such is the experience of all nations that forget God.

In America we see these conditions recurring. Wickedness fills the land. America's justice system has broken down, permitting anarchy and misrule. The murdering of unborn children has climbed into the millions. Divorce and sexual perversion (as evidenced by epidemic levels of venereal disease) far exceeds in popular appeal than marriage and family living. Even idolatry fills the land as multitudes worship the stars (astrology), witchcraft, cults, and various media created fads.

All of these evils would not be formidable were it not that the Church has so little redeeming value (I'm referring to the institutional church). Our churches are full of wickedness and antinomian ministers who refuse to expel their offending members.

Even within the true, but invisible, Church, false theologies have made it almost impossible to find the truth-- the source of our redemption as a people. Because of such ignorance, the multitudes vainly wander about, seeking the solution to their ills. They look to economic models; they look to political views.





They follow this leader and that one. They are tossed about from fad to fad, never finding the truth. They seem never to understand that the source of their troubles has been their rejection of God's Holy Law. Such a people are doomed to perish.

The calamity that fell upon ancient Israel was famine and disease, torture and death, brutality, madness, and exile-- a dear price to pay for departing from the way of righteousness. Their military defenses were futile; their captors were unmerciful. America faces the same calamity today.

One final sin committed by ancient Israel was its final hedonistic plunge while the city was under siege:

The Lord, the Lord Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! "Let us eat and drink," you say, "for tomorrow we die!" The Lord Almighty has revealed this in my hearing: "Till your dying day this sin will not be atoned for," says the Lord, the Lord Almighty. (Isaiah 22:12-14)

God promised that there would be no forgiveness because of this sin.

America stands very close to this danger point. As her enemies continue to isolate and surround her, America prefers to party and play instead of fast and pray. What can be done now to secure the aid of Heaven? It appears to be too late to save the nation.

## THE CHRISTIAN DURING RIOT AND REVOLUTION-- AMERICA'S ROLE

In our quest for the triumph of God's Kingdom on Earth, a matured idealism must be sought. We live in a period of cultural retrogression. Christian civilization has lost its hold on humanity. The immediate future does not look bright. We cannot indulge the hope of a soon triumph of God's Kingdom. What we need are Christian Reconstructionists who have their "sights" set on the long-range goal. We need those who are willing to roll up their sleeves and work towards a goal they may not live to see accomplished. In short, we need a generation of Christians willing to die so that a Christian posterity might live.

Retrospection calls to mind the unsung heroes of American history. Ministers are remembered, such as Jonathan Edwards and Joseph Bellamy-- theologians who reiterated the postmillennialism of the Puritan tradition, reviving the Colonial spirit for the trial of Revolution and Independence. Men are remembered, such as Timothy Dwight and N.W. Taylor, who drove from Yale and other higher institutions the infidelity and madness of the French Revolution through the articulation of a theodicy unmatched in modern times. And then there was Charles Finney, that preeminent "prince of the pulpit", whose revivals translated post-millennialism into social and political action that abolished slavery and other national evils, and launched an invigorated world missions crusade.

It must not be overlooked. American heritage is rooted and grounded in a postmillennial hope of the triumph of the Kingdom of God. From the signing of the Mayflower Compact to this day, America's calling has been to crusade for the heavenly kingdom-- to be a city set on a hill.<sup>34</sup> American character still bears the albeit faded image of that calling today. Whether it is the ambitions of Manifest Destiny or the misguided role of world policeman, America is still moved by that impulse to change the world to be like America. It has been our national religion for centuries.

America may become wicked in selfish indulgence and moral dissipation. America may turn to other gods and prostitute her glory; but she can never forget her calling. And every reflection on the meaning of America's existence will draw the impulse of that hope and the urge for that labor for which she is so fond-- the triumph of the Kingdom of God. It should be acknowledged by all candid historians that to be a true American is to be a Kingdom builder.

That calling may soon be revoked, however, as the Almighty prepares to seal America for Judgment. He will not forbear much longer. He may divorce America and call another nation. It behooves the Patriot, therefore, to labor all the more diligently in ridding our nation of those wicked multitudes that are filling the land.

This writer is one who holds to a conspiratorial view of history and believes that it is the Biblical view. In short, it is the viewpoint that recognizes that a plot exists to dethrone the Messiah of His Kingdom. Men conspire against each other to extend their godless dominions, but the ultimate conspiracy is that of Satan's to establish his own kingdom. It is a futile plot according to Scripture, as Psalm 2 explains.

There are, however, important matters at stake involving the destiny of mankind. Will God succeed in His purpose of restoration or will man's rebellion continue to worsen and to bring agonizing delays in God's triumph? The answer to that question lies in the response of the Church to its calling. Looking to the Church in the United States does not offer encouraging signs.

Perhaps, the greatest opportunity yet to establish God's Kingdom was just 150 years ago when revivals and reformations filled the land. America's burgeoning leadership role and her Christian heritage provided her with a unique opportunity to be a Kingdom builder. Her failure and subsequent apostasy has led some to wonder if the Kingdom message should be taken to another country, perhaps Brazil, where the Bible is taught in its public schools and tremendous natural resources are at her disposal for industrial development. Perhaps, God has abandoned America and, like Israel, will give the Kingdom to another nation that will bear the fruits thereof.

That is a perplexing proposition and one that cannot easily be answered. However, God has been raising up Christian Reconstructionists throughout the world, especially America. Such Christians are becoming actively involved in social and political issues within the United States, which should offer a sincere hope for a reconstruction of our society. But it is still too early to tell.

The other bright star arising is the Christian school movement within the fundamentalist churches that may soon provide a new breed of Americans and intellectual elite.<sup>35</sup> Presently, the movement lacks a sense of direction except as an "escape hatch" out of the public school system. This disorientation may be in part due to the suddenness of its appearance and also in part to the lack of leadership from the Church. I believe the Church's lack of a kingdom and dominion message has left it largely impotent to contribute a meaningful leadership role.

Christian schools face severe opposition from bureaucratic agencies dominated by humanists. They understand the significance of the movement-- that it will destroy any hopes for an atheistic and socialistic, global community. If the present Administration in Washington fails to establish Christian schools on equal but separate footing with the public schools, we may be in deep trouble. Already, some parents in some states have lost custody of their children for refusing to send their children to be indoctrinated in statist schools. If the humanists ever regain total control of our federal government, we will face the unfortunate alternatives of capitulation, armed resistance, or emigration to a more favorable country. I do not think we have past the 1984 elections to settle this issue.

Capitulation would be unthinkable to the faithful; emigration would be heartbreaking. Armed resistance would only be formidable if it was widespread and if the chances were remote that the federal government would turn against its own people with its gigantic military arsenal.

Because the United States is a Covenant nation before God, not only in its origins, but also in the ethnic constitution of its people (the European peoples were at one time known as "Christendom"), I believe that God will judge it differently than other nations. He has already judged Europe with two World Wars and various economic disasters; Europe has not repented. Will America follow Europe's lead toward apostasy, or will she repent? The Old Testament accounts of Israel and Judah provide striking similarities to the present crisis. A careful student of prophecy will not overlook their applicability. God will judge America as He does all Covenant nations.

It is my belief that God's judgment of America will result in a godly remnant that will be able to take effective control of a part of this continent, at least. But that will only be made possible after large numbers of pagan Americans are physically destroyed or made culturally impotent. This will require a separation of the righteous from the wicked, so that the latter will be recipients of God's wrath. God's people, the righteous, are promised protection from God's wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Some have supposed that the only possible and safe method of separation of the godly from the wicked is through physical removal of the godly from the earth; hence, the pre-tribulation rapture theory has arisen. The faultiness of this theory (as it pertains to this subject, anyway) is plainly this: it sees God as some bumbling idiot, accidentally punishing the righteous for the sins of the wicked. It perceives Him as incompetent or indifferent to the appropriate enforcement of moral law. The Scriptures contradict the viewpoint that God cannot protect the righteous in history and on Earth. As 2 Peter 2:9 reads:

(I)f this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. (NIV)

Examples cited by Peter in this chapter of God's protection of His people from His wrath were those of Noah and Lot. God has protected His people before; He can do it again.<sup>36</sup>

The examples of God's deliverance of Noah and Lot lead us to the next point: there is no cataclysmic sign to warn (in time enough to prepare) of God's impending judgment. As Jesus said to His disciples in Luke 17:26-30:

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.

NIV (emphasis added)

There is no sign for the wicked, except the ethical and physical separation of the righteous from the wicked. According to church history, because the Early Church heeded Christ's command in Matthew 24 (in Mark and Luke, also) to flee the regions of Jerusalem when the "Abomination of Desolation" appeared, their lives were preserved from the horrors of its *siege* and destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D. In fact, this is what Paul was saying when he predicted the fall of Jerusalem (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). Antichrist, the Roman Caesar (Titus) would not be known as such until he entered the temple of Jerusalem and profaned it. But he was restrained (by God) until the Christians left the city. The day the Christians left Jerusalem was the day its doom was sealed. Moral: if a godly man grows angry because of sin and leaves an institution because of it, if you are smart, you will go with him.

An appropriate question arises: how do the righteous know when it's time to go? Does it have something to do with this "Abomination of Desolation"? If so, what is it?

As R.J. Rushdoony has pointed out, the temple was profaned by the Jews themselves before the Romans ever did. In his commentary on Matthew 24, he says:

The desecration and destruction of the temple is immediately brought to the Jewish mind by verse 15. The reference to Daniel does not mean that Daniel 9:27 and Daniel 12:11 are fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem. Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled before the time of Christ, and is described in 1 Mace. 1:20-68. This desolation is analogous to the earlier one. In this instance, however, the desecration, took place during the Jewish War, under the instance of the Zealots themselves, as Josephus makes clear. Thus, the desolation which preceded the fall of the temple (v. 2), was in this instance Jewish. The Jews, having crucified the Lord of Glory, thought nothing, finally, of defiling the temple in their self-defense. The desolation of the temple, made possible by the Zealots who admitted the Idumeans into the sanctuary, as a result of which 8,500 men were slain, took place BEFORE the siege of Jerusalem by Titus. Thus, Jesus gave this event as a sign to the Christians that the nation was finished, and they must flee. The advice of these verses, therefore, is for believers, who, trusting their Lord, will flee when His prophecy comes to pass.<sup>37</sup>

This was how the Christians knew it was time to leave. The Jews had been worthy of destruction up to this time; but to profane their own sacred temple, without a qualm of conscience, proved they were reprobate indeed. This was the "Abomination of Desolation": *when the people of God profane their own temple.*

God does not let His people passively enjoy His protection. They demonstrate their worthiness by their grief and hatred toward sin. There is no room for lukewarmness. You have to either be hot or cold. If you want to be God's chosen, His Elect, then you must obey His commands concerning separation from sin and sinners (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). As Revelation 18:4,5 warns:

Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes." (NV)

This passage is a warning to flee Babylon. The true signs of imminent judgment have to do with the ethical separation of the righteous, and then, because of persecution, their physical separation. This is the pattern established Biblically.

The scenario of God's judgment upon America, I expect to be something like this: Although the United States is past redemption as a nation, because it is also a covenant of nations (states via U. S. Constitution) and in some cases, a covenant of provinces (counties via state constitutions), God will judge us by governmental units. This is His way when He governs men collectively, always by governmental unit (civil, church, family, etc.). This form of judgment does not necessarily preclude a nationwide judgment simultaneously (such as a nuclear war), but it does offer the hope that isolated townships, counties, and even states (perhaps) will escape God's wrath. What this means is that God will separate His people from the wicked before He pours out His wrath.

This separation first requires an ethical separation. God will first give those who profess to be His people an opportunity to repent. He will "mark" those who are grieved over the sins of the nation (Ezekiel 9:4,5). God's judgment begins at His house (1 Peter 4:17). The chastisement that leads to repentance brings healing; the chastisement that leads to reprobation brings utter destruction.

In America, this ethical separation is occurring as a result of the sounding of the alarm on atheistic humanism. True Christians are beginning to realize what it means to be righteous while surrounded by a militant paganism. We are witnessing a growing epistemological self-consciousness that is gradually bringing an institutional separation of the godly from the wicked. It is also bringing their persecution.

The most notable example of this institutional separation is the Christian school movement. And it will be the conflict over Christian schools that will precipitate the coming physical removal-- the last sign before judgment.

The reason I believe this is because education has been so important to America from its beginning. The Pilgrims and Puritans established common schools for the purpose of teaching the Bible, to perpetuate the Christian religion. In a very real sense they have been our temples; except that today, they are the temples of a new religion-- secular humanism.<sup>38</sup>

I do not ignore the various ugly crimes we commit as a nation, such as abortion. But the issue of Christian schools far exceeds in importance; for if we lose our liberty to educate our children, we will lose the only source of redemption left. Silence the Christian schools, and the state schools will be rid of their last formidable opponent resisting the new paganism. All will be blackness following.

If the effort is successful to establish independent, Christian schools, it will be a turning point in American history. Regardless of what the government may do on any other moral issue (including abortion), the Christian world view and ethic will prevail against a corrupt opposition. If we fail on the freedom of Christian schools, it matters little if we have abolished abortion. The movement for moral reform will quickly lose its consensus and the scourge of abortion and worse moral crimes will prevail.

This will be America's Abomination of Desolation: its elimination of independent, Christian schools. With only state schools remaining, in a biblical sense this will be offering America's children to Moloch (the state) and as the Scriptures say in Ezekiel 23:39:

On the very day they sacrificed their children to their idols, they entered my sanctuary and desecrated it. (NIV)

America, in a sense, has already committed its "Abomination of Desolation"; it has sacrificed its future (children) to the state schools (the temples of Moloch). It has desecrated God's temple; the nation is finished.

Ethical separation has been occurring over the past twenty years. The second separation, the one of physical removal, will shortly occur.

Those states or counties which outlaw or repress (through licensing regulations) Christian schools will experience an emigration of the godly to those states which permit this freedom. (We are assuming that the lukewarm in the churches will be too

busy sleeping in their affluence to care. They will be the five foolish virgins). States with permissive policies on Christian schools will have a much higher percentage of the godly. Those states or counties will be exempt from judgment, but not chastisement. The repressive states will experience God's wrath bringing utter destruction.

In writing this paper, it has been difficult avoiding comment on the moral and religious challenge of our times. Undoubtedly, as these very words are penned, perverse men are at work, here and abroad, to reduce mankind to the status of cattle as an international oligarchy and totalitarian state emerge. America and the world are at a crossroads. Satan has engineered a clever plan of deception to delude the masses and enslave them. At this point, only America is big enough and has the necessary heritage from which to draw the vision and the strength to save the world from another dark age. I am not being naively messianic in saying that. It is a verity that only America has been stamped with the imprint of that hope in the triumph of God's Kingdom. No other nation on Earth or in history, with the possible exception of ancient Israel, has had such a foundation.

The question is not reduced to whether there should be world government or not. The question is "Who should the world governor be and upon what law system should it be based?" The day must be made to come when the proclamation would be issued from the United Nations that Jesus Christ be declared sovereign of all the earth and that the Bible be the Constitution of the new Christian World Order.

Satan's kingdom is fierce with iron strength; but as the prophet Daniel explained, it is also made of clay. It will crumble as quickly as it comes to power.

Today, we are witnessing the end of an age, not the age of Christian civilization, but the civilization of autonomous man. Humanism and related futile speculations have run their course. Even while cultural self-consciousness is causing a polarization between the Christian and the world and is exposing Christians to persecution, it is a sign that the judgment has already begun. God is marking His people.

We will probably continue to see an escalation in world tension as the game of balancing world power continues and becomes more precarious. The tension will reach a crisis point which will bring a subsequent period of rapid decentralization. There will be armed conflict, perhaps on a grand scale. At least a limited nuclear exchange seems likely. In America there will be an economic breakdown that will turn the inner cities into nightmares of rioting, but will likely leave the countryside in stable and comparatively safe condition. We may see a return to a new feudalism that has proven to be a useful form of government in a highly decentralized economy and in a period of unrest. Feudalism occurred in Medieval Europe when the national governments could no longer defend the people from the Vikings and other raiding tribes. It was an agrarian society on large landed estates that provided a stable economy for its people.

We will continue to see a disintegration of the present world order. Terrorism, war, and disaster are probably in store, but that does not mean that the Christian is impotent. A power vacuum is being created as humanists abdicate control of a dying civilization. Christians now have the opportunity like they never have had before to take the reins of power and establish a kingdom of righteousness.

## CONCLUSION

So many in the Church have already resigned the world to the devil. While multitudes have never heard the Name of Jesus and hundreds of millions are being ground under the heels of godless communism, the Church closes its eyes, folds its hands, and pretends its job is done. It thinks the age of grace has ended and that God is ready to take His people home. But God is ready to do no such thing. Do you not see the multitudes plunge into hell? Do you not think that our great God has pity for them? Do you think He is proud of such selfishness He sees in the Church? No! He weeps over it and pleads with us to do our duty and rescue the perishing. Surely God is ready to vomit over all the pious self-satisfaction and unconcern in the Church. Everybody wants to go in the rapture. I wonder how many are willing to miss it and carry forth the Word of Life through tribulation.

How such abominable doctrines as these acquired the cloak of orthodoxy is truly amazing. Perhaps, it is an indication of how apostate the Church really is.

Yet, the calling of God still stands. It has not been revoked or given to another. His gifts and callings are "without repentance". The Church has been called to a conflict. It is time to put on the armor of God and to wage war against wickedness. This is no occasion for peace-time affluence and relaxation. The trumpet has sounded that will never sound retreat. The Sword has been issued from the mouth of the King; it is the Word of God. The time is now for "those who know their God" to be "strong and do exploits". They must take hold of that Holy Word and proclaim its message with all their might.

The moment of decision is here and will not tarry. If we refuse, we face the tragedy of another age of darkness. If we obey, there is **hope for tomorrow.**



## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>The Great Commission entails much more than evangelism-- the proclamation of the good news. It also requires the discipling of the converts which takes a lengthy period of time to accomplish.
- <sup>2</sup>This sequence of Scriptures demonstrates that the Kingdom of God has prevailed through Christ and is being exercised through His People on Earth.
- <sup>3</sup>Matthew 13:11 cf. Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10. There are many more.
- <sup>4</sup>"But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death."  
Proverbs 8:36  
"The Lord works out everything for his own ends-- even the wicked for the day of disaster." Proverbs 16:4  
"In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps." 16:9  
"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." 19:21
- <sup>5</sup>Proverbs 2:22; 10:30; 11:31; Psalms 104:35; 37:38; 52:5
- <sup>6</sup>It is amazing that some commentators overlook this. The principle subject of each of the parables is the Kingdom. The seed, the wheat, the mustard seed, the leaven, and the treasure-- all are representative of the Kingdom. It violates the structure of the parables to insist otherwise.
- <sup>7</sup>These facts are documented and well-known to theological historians. One is referred to David McPherson's book THE INCREDIBLE COVER-UP.
- <sup>8</sup>Ribera is also a familiar figure to theological historians. One is simply referred to the ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, 11th Ed., XXIII, 213c-iii & iv. It is true that another Jesuit, Alcazar, defended the Pope from the Preterist interpretation. But that was only a re-articulation of a pre-Augustinian position within the Early Church.
- <sup>9</sup>Adam naming the animals in Genesis chapter 2 is an example of how God honors man's freedom to discover God's thoughts after Him.
- <sup>10</sup>One is referred to Howard Elseth's book DID GOD KNOW? for further discussion of this important subject.
- <sup>11</sup>Again, I refer you to Howard Elseth's book.
- <sup>12</sup>The dividing of a Scriptural narrative into segments belonging to different dispensations and different races seems to produce a sort of hermeneutical schizophrenia. This sort of interpretation does not arise as a necessity from the Biblical narratives; it is read in arbitrarily. As an example, Matthew 24 does not require such distinctions to be made, yet many interpreters borrow other Scriptures to make this chapter apply to the Jews during the Great Tribulation. Some go so far as to say (seeing the need for consistency) that the Sermon on the Mount is for the Kingdom Age and not for us today.
- <sup>13</sup>When you find passages such as 2 Peter 3:8, then you highly question the precision of modern, literalistic interpreters.

<sup>14</sup>Others would include Moses' intercession in Exodus 32:7-14 and David's supplication in 1 Chronicles 21:26,27.

<sup>15</sup>There have been other dark times in history when He could have ended it. Why would He want to permit multitudes to be born whom He knew would go to hell?

<sup>16</sup>The ministry of the Holy Spirit would be illegal and presumptuous if it was not a King who sent Him.

<sup>17</sup>Acts 2:30-36

<sup>18</sup>Romans 9:25,26; Revelation 20:1,2

<sup>19</sup>Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22-24. Revelation 21

<sup>20</sup>Pietist theology is one that originated in Germany of the 17th century. Its emphasis was upon the emotional experience of conversion rather than its ethical mandates. Covenant theology emphasizes personal and social ethics in active obedience to the terms of God's Covenant with men.

<sup>21</sup>Ezekiel 21:27; Haggai 2:6; Hebrews 12:26-29

<sup>22</sup>Psalms 37:38; 52:5; 104:35; Proverbs 2:22

<sup>23</sup>Romans 2:3-11 especially vs. 8 & 10. Note the sequence of ethnic groups cited by Paul who first hear the gospel and then are judged.

<sup>24</sup>Revelation 11:8 clearly explains that it is Jerusalem being referred to in chapters 5-11 (fulfilled 70 A.D.). Revelation 17:18 establishes that the subject of chapters 17-19 is Rome (fulfilled 476 A.D.).

<sup>25</sup>This is referred to by Elseth as "ecbatic prophecy"— historical parallelisms better known by theologians as typologies. God establishes His types in Scripture, to demonstrate to His people how it is that they can predict God's actions in His moral Government. If God had not have done this, there would have been a constant need for new revelations from God, since He would be unpredictable in His disposition to govern. But now the pattern has been established for all time in the Bible.

<sup>26</sup>UNREACHED PEOPLES '79 published by David C. Cook Publishing Co., page 19

<sup>27</sup>This is the true meaning of Genesis 3:15. It is not a telic prediction of Christ. God is predicting the triumph of His purpose for man over all opposition.

<sup>28</sup>Job 1:6-12; Romans 3:25,26 and Revelation 12:10. Satan became the destroyer, the angel of death-- Hebrews 2:14,15.

<sup>29</sup>Many scholars have a much too rigid and simplistic explanation of Satan's rebellion. I see the Old Testament as the period of war in heaven. I see the New Testament and today as the period of war on earth. God is winning through love and forgiveness as principles in His Kingdom (see also 2 Corinthians 2:10,11 where Paul explains that the best weapons against Satan are such graces). These viewpoints that I offer are well supported by the opinions of the Early Church Fathers.(see CHRISTUS VICTOR by Gustaf Aulen, Macmillan Publishing, 1978). (In regards to Abraham, I am referring

to God's request that he offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. Abraham could well have questioned God because only pagans practiced such infanticide.

<sup>30</sup>John 8:44

<sup>31</sup>John 16:11; 1 Peter 3:19; Luke 10:18

<sup>32</sup>Hebrews 5:8,9 cf. 10:12-14; 1:3,4

<sup>33</sup>See *THY KINGDOM COME* by R. J. Rushdoony

<sup>34</sup>*SEPARATION ILLUSTION* by John Whitehead, (Mott Media, Midford, MI 1977) pg. 17, "In 1892 the United States Supreme Court made an exhaustive study of the supposed connection between Christianity and the government of the United States. After reviewing hundreds of volumes of historical documents, the Court asserted, 'These references. . . add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a religious people. . . a Christian nation!!' See also *THE LIGHT AND THE GLORY* by Peter Marshall and David Manuel, Revell Publishing.

<sup>35</sup>It is estimated that three new Christian schools are started each day somewhere in the U.S.

<sup>36</sup>John 17:15-- "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." (NIV)

<sup>37</sup>*THY KINGDOM COME*, Rushdoony page 238, 239

<sup>38</sup>See *THE MESSIANIC CHARACTER OF AMERICAN EDUCATION* by Rushdoony

<sup>39</sup>See Rushdoony's *INSTITUTES OF BIBLICAL LAW*, pg.32,33: "Moloch is the 'king' or 'kingship'. . . Moloch worship was thus state worship. The state was the true and ultimate order, and religion was a department of state. The state claimed total jurisdiction over man; it was therefore entitled to total sacrifice."

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